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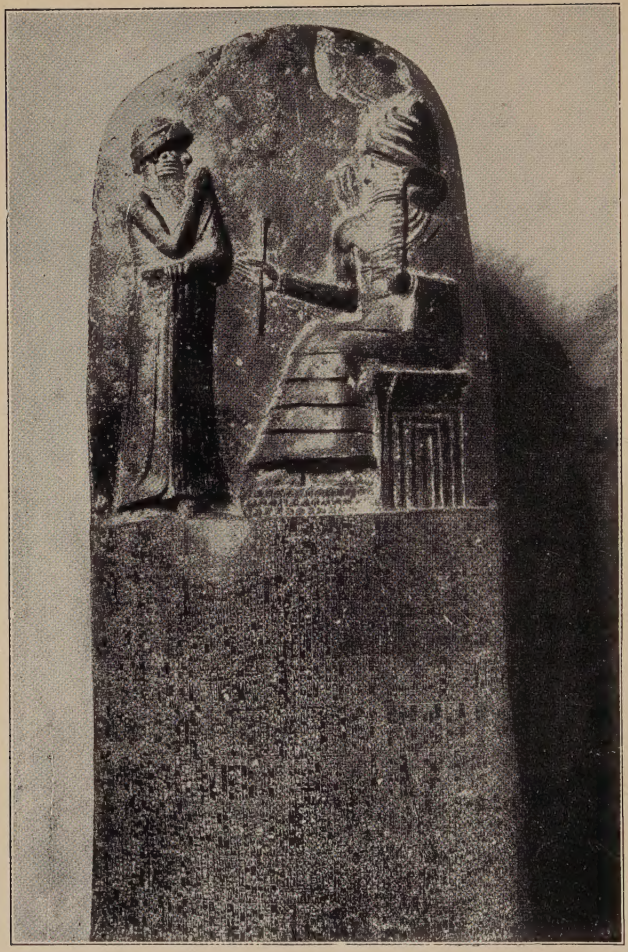
CONCERNING THE BIBLE



THE BLACK DIORITE BLOCK

Found in Susa 1901, representing King Hammurabi receiving the Laws from his God.

[*Frontispiece.*

CONCERNING THE BIBLE

A brief sketch of
Its Origin, Growth and Contents

BY
CONRAD SKINNER, M.A.
(*Chaplain of Leys School*)

WITH A FOREWORD BY
DR. J. PATERSON SMYTH

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PREFACE

I HAVE wondered for some years whether there might not be room for yet one more book on the Bible, covering in a single volume the ground which has already been traversed many times by specialists in the various related spheres. In those several books the scholars concerned have, of course, treated their subjects more ably and adequately than I could hope to do. This volume, nevertheless, is issued in the belief that it may afford some assistance to those who are conscious that their foundations of knowledge in the matter of the Bible's origin, construction and compilation, together with the various theories of inspiration concerned, are more imperfect in places than they could wish. There will be others, too, who desire to possess a general introduction to the subject that shall take nothing for granted through assuming any previous systematic knowledge on the part of the reader. Lastly, there are many, I think, who are anxious to know the extent to which Science and Criticism have affected our view of the Bible. To meet this triple need this book endeavours to

give a compact and comprehensive survey of the history and problems concerned.

It has had many friends in its inception. Undertaken with the approval of Dr. Paterson Smyth, and with his most helpful co-operation, the book owes its biggest debt to him and to the famous series of books he so freely placed at my disposal for the purpose.[1] I would mention, too, the courtesy and consideration of the publishers and the most valuable help of those friends who have laboured over the proofs. Touching other indebtedness, which is manifold and great, I have endeavoured to indicate it wherever possible in text and footnote.

There is a further point on which I feel I must touch here. It will appear strange to some readers, perhaps, that I consistently review the New Testament before the Old Testament, when historical continuity would seem to demand the reverse. I have, however, done this advisedly, and largely as an offset to the notion, liable to be bred in one's mind, that the New Testament is merely an appendix to the Old instead of constituting a distinct literature. The points of relation have, I think, been adequately established, so that no one will go to the opposite extreme in imagining

[1] The four books referred to are, in the order suggested by the author: *The Bible in the Making; How we got our Bible; The Old Documents and the New Bible; How God Inspired the Bible.* Such as pass on from my book to the fuller treatment provided in this series will find themselves in no strange countryside, but rather in a wide, deep quarry where I have been before them!

that *no* connection exists; but the fact remains that early Christianity *naturally* produced its own literature. It did not imagine for a moment that in so doing it was *continuing* the Old Testament, or, for that matter, establishing a Testament at all. The New Testament would have come into existence, with certain modification, if there had never been an Old Testament.

Within the narrow limits of this book it has not been possible to enter into alternative theories of chronology for the Epistles and certain other matters of a debatable character, but my policy has been to give the "standard" modern position, and, where possible, to indicate an outstanding divergence in a footnote, so as not to confuse the reader.

FOREWORD

I HAVE been reading with much interest Mr. Skinner's new book. I think it is a fine piece of work, and something very much needed in the present day vagueness and ignorance about the Bible, its origins and its authority. The book is not only very interestingly written, but, what I more admire, it is refreshingly straight and candid about difficulties. It is a good rule in all such teaching to be thoroughly truthful; to assert nothing as certain which is not certain; nothing as probable which is not probable; and nothing as more probable than it is. Such attitude will always win confidence.

I have often wished for such definite teaching in schools, but had almost given up hope of it. It is a real pleasure to see this book, and my pleasure is increased by the writer's generous statement that my writings have helped him. I am proud of that. I shall watch with much interest the progress of the book. I congratulate any school that has it for a text-book.

J. PATERSON SMYTH,

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INTRODUCTION

Fair Questions

You are holding in your hand, we will suppose, a copy of the Bible, beautifully printed on thin paper and neatly bound together in limp morocco. The mark of the craftsman and the printing-press is, you feel, altogether too clear for you to be satisfied with the quaint notion of simple and credulous minds that somehow these scriptures slipped down from Heaven along the arc of the rainbow, a message straight from God to man.

Then, *Where did they come from?* That is a fair question. But it will carry you a long way, like a magic carpet or seven-league boots, if you heed it. "That," you may say, "is all to the good. However far it carry me I will go." If that be your mood a satisfactory answer is almost assured.

You will be halted first just at the toe of the binding where you may see inscribed, *Oxford.*

On the title page you will find, amplified, *Oxford, At the University Press.* That, then, is your first posting-house. Your particular volume hailed from Oxford. How did Oxford get hold of the copyright? From what author? Why?

On the middle of the back of your binding you have by now noticed, *Revised Version.* This, then, is not the original work. "Revision" bespeaks a previous edition. On looking within, you find that the Revision of the Old Testament was finally accomplished on June 20, 1884, and delivered from the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey, on July 10 of that year; a work begun by twenty-seven scholars on June 30, 1870, of whom ten had died and two resigned before the accomplishment of their great labour. No longer now do visitors hear from the lips of the door-keeper the quaint utterance: "The Old Testament is sitting, sir." The cedar-lined, tapestried room has witnessed the completion of the heavy task. In like manner the New Testament Revisers announced the conclusion of their labours on November 11, 1880, as you will see in their Preface to the New Testament.

In both cases you find that the Revisers declare their work to be a revision of a certain *Authorised Version.* I imagine you reaching down a copy of this Authorised Version from your shelves at home, and possibly finding inscribed in it the name of your father or mother in ink that is

fading. When you turn over its pages you notice superficial differences, quaint marginal dates by Archbishop Ussher who was a seventeenth century divine, separate paragraphing of each verse, a little introduction in italics at the head of each chapter. The preface you will find dedicated to King James, i.e. James I. You have now taken the first great leap, covering a space of more than two hundred and fifty years, to your next posting-house. You will realise it is only a posting-house, not your goal. Yet, when a book has been established in usage for nearly three hundred years without a rival, it is easy to understand that it might be regarded as the veritable original by saints more pious than informed. As one dear old lady said nearly thirty years ago to a clerical friend of mine, after he had read in church from the Revised Version: "Ah, laddie, stick to the Old Book! stick to the Old Book." She imagined that the Authorised Version was the Book that had come direct from the hands of God, and that the Revised Version was some pretentious upstart. She was troubled just through lack of knowledge. Sometimes the error is due not only to sheer ignorance but also to blatant and self-satisfied bigotry. Dr. Paterson Smyth records the incident of the smart young American deacon who thought to crush the Revised Version on its first appearance by informing his people that "if the Authorised Version was good enough for St. Paul it was good enough

for him"![1] blandly ignoring the trifling fact that Paul lived sixteen hundred years too soon to catch a glimpse of it.

Whence, then, did those fifty-four compilers, whom James grouped together out of High Church, Puritan and non-sectarian scholars, derive their material? In the ensuing section I will endeavour to delineate how you must jump back and back and back, like a grasshopper, until you find yourselves in the hazy beginnings of history, with this strange book rising dimly like a marsh exhalation from the very origins of Hebrew civilisation and religious consciousness. By that time you will have some answer to your second question: i.e. *How did these books come to be written?* From which I shall pass on quickly to a third legitimate question. You have noticed, perhaps, that in your edition of the Revised Version there is bound up between Old Testament and New Testament a section called the Apocrypha—Old Testament Apocrypha. *On what grounds are these books cut off from the rest?* What is the Apocrypha? Well, the word means "obscure" or "hidden," and, in practice, it was applied to books that were "kept from public use." Yet some of the books (e.g., Maccabees and Ecclesiasticus) appeared likely at times to gain admission with the rest, only to fail at last. In the Diaspora Bible, i.e., the Bible of the Dispersed Jews whose head-quarters were Alex-

[1] *How we got our Bible*, p. 144.

andria, the whole Apocrypha found a place with the rest of the Old Testament. But, considering the puerility and poverty of most of the books, it is matter for thankfulness that they missed their way into the canonical collection. ("Canon" or "rule" is the name applied either to Old Testament or New Testament to describe books that came up to the requisite standard.) But what was the standard? And how was judgment passed? What criterion or test entitled a book to a place in the Canon or Testament? Is the decision sound? Is it final? These are questions to which you have a right to expect answers; and I trust in the corresponding section to supply them, being mainly interested for the moment in interpreting the questions that rise naturally in your mind as you hold this Revised Version in your hand. The one solution I shall not suggest to your inquiry is the queer legend associated with the Council of Nice, to the effect that all the competing books were laid by the altar, and prayer was joined that God would make distinction, whereupon, according to the story, all the canonical books leapt upon the altar and the rest remained on the floor!

Accepting, for the moment, the bare fact that some books *were* selected out of the respective Jewish and Christian literatures, the fourth big question which arises, or will one day arise, in your mind is: *Are these books different from other books? if so, why?* In short, why "*Holy*

Bible"? You will ask, and you have a right to ask, of these books a question which contemporaries asked of Jesus concerning Himself, i.e., *By what authority?* That question will have a section to itself, and, when we come to it, you shall not be put off with the unworthy subterfuge still current here and there in my own youth when such questions were asked. The argument would run: *How do you know God said it?—Because the Bible says so. Why do you accept the Bible?—Because it is God's Word.* That was a circle from which there was no escape. But one arrives nowhere by running round in a circle. We will try to deal more honestly by logic, reason and intelligence, and thus do more honour to truth. But the discussion of Inspiration must of necessity come after study of the evidence—not before. It was because of the reversal of this order that the statements and demands of earlier generations in matters concerning the Bible and its Inspiration now appear so arbitrary and unacceptable.

The four questions thus briefly stated, we approach the subject in detail, allotting one Part to each. As far as possible all evidence on which conclusions are based will be made clear, nor will anything be slurred over because it is awkward or uncomfortable. In most cases mere ignorance of the facts is responsible for confusion and distress of mind: only in a small minority does obstinacy reinforce error against the display

of truth, and thereby lead to permanent disablement.

The Baconian principle is quite as applicable to the Bible as to Nature: "Question Nature herself," said Bacon, "and she will answer you truly. Clear your mind of preconceived notions, examine the facts and appearances of Nature, and see what theory you can form to include them all." The facts, then, are first to be approached with an open and teachable mind, free from deliberate warp or bias. Afterwards, with the facts clear before us we will deduce such theories as we may.

PART I

WHERE DID THE BIBLE COME FROM?

(*A*)

A BACKWARD LEAP

STARTING from the *Revised Version*, and ignoring the noteworthy individual versions of varying excellence produced by our own generation, inasmuch as they depend on the same main sources as the Revised Version, we reach back to the *Authorised Version* of 1611. The next backward jump takes us from 1611 to 1560, the date of the *Geneva Bible*, done at Geneva (as its name suggests) by exiles from the terror of Mary's reign. It was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth and graciously accepted. This confirmed the gesture previously made by her in welcoming "the Bible in English" presented to her when as queen she entered London on January 14, 1559.[1] These two actions were clearly a re-affirmation of the cardinal spirit of the Reformation, namely, that a free Bible was to be the religious authority of the ensuing reign, as against the tyranny of a Rome-dominated Church.

Passing swiftly on, we touch the *Great Bible* of 1539 and *Coverdale's Bible* of 1535, merely

[1] See p. 87 note. This date is confirmed by Strype; Annals of the Reformation, I. 43.

pausing to add that these were respectively an authorised version and a remodelled version of the magnificent work of the "banned rebel," *Tyndale*, who was strangled and burned at the stake in 1536,[1] some ten years after his New Testament had seen the light.

The next great landmark, *Wyclif*, is removed not only by a space of more than a century but by epoch-marking evolutions and inventions that make this gap the most significant in the history of the English Bible. Still, we note that Wyclif, towards the close of the fourteenth century, produced the first complete English Bible, creating not only a tradition but also a valuable work of reference for his successors.

But whence did Wyclif get his materials?

This involves a leap of a thousand years!

Wyclif translated from a Latin version of the Scriptures prepared by *Jerome* in 385 (i.e., as concerns the New Testament. His Old Testament was a little later).

And whence did Jerome derive his version?

He revised the existing Latin New Testament with assistance from Greek manuscripts, and actually translated the Old Testament from the original Hebrew. His work is the basis of the Roman Catholic Bible of to-day, of the Rhemish and Douay Testaments, and to it our Authorised Version owes not a little direct as well as much indirect assistance.

What then of these Greek manuscripts? Well,

[1] Sometimes given as 1535.

seeing that no Greek copy of the New Testament has survived which can be placed earlier than Jerome, it may well be surmised that those copies of the original Greek New Testament books which he used dated somewhere in the second century. It would be unlikely that the original manuscript of, say, Mark or Paul came under his hand. It is true that a chain of indisputable links is quite clearly to be traced between what is lost and what we possess. Nevertheless, we must admit that *none of the original books of either Testament has survived*, only copies of copies remaining for us. Of the New Testament no copy that we possess can safely be dated much earlier than A.D. 400, whereas the New Testament was written, and almost entirely assembled, somewhere between A.D. 45 and A.D. 150.

As for the Old Testament, we have no copy that can be pushed farther back than the time of Edmund Atheling, to give an English landmark; or, roughly, the tenth century A.D.

And its composition? Impossible to say when the oral traditions, ballads, legends, historical and prophetic reminiscences first came to be committed to stone or parchment. If Moses were responsible for some of the laws that bear his name, perhaps a date 1300 B.C. might be fixed as the earliest. Inasmuch, however, as we find Semitic tablets, containing legends and laws, and dating before 2000 B.C., it is quite impossible to say for certain that Hebrew narratives and

laws may not have been so inscribed long before 1300.[1] However, it is unlikely that much of that type of literature could have been carried out of Egypt and round about the wilderness. Hence about 1200 B.C. is a likely initial date. For the final date there is a tendency to fix the writing of Daniel at about 168 B.C., the time of the heroic Maccabean war. This gives us roughly a thousand years or so of composition, though undoubtedly nearly all the work would be committed to writing in its final form from 600 B.C. onwards. And our earliest surviving Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament dates about A.D. 950!

Thus, during the rigour of a Rome-ruled Palestine, were written the Greek originals of that New Testament of yours. Although, probably, they will never be found, something about them is continually being discovered or deduced.[2] But, for the Old Testament, we shall have to pierce the shadows, as far as we may, of the primitive history of a people. And we shall discover that this people always felt in their hearts that they were a *chosen* people, through long ages uttering their faith, recording their revelations, announcing their sense of destiny, whispering their hope of an ultimate Saviour, in a literature that was to win at last the devoted

[1] The Tell-el-Amarna tablets and the laws of Hammurabi show clearly that the art of writing in Babylonia, the cradle of Semitic history, was very much earlier than Moses. See note p. 166.

[2] E.g., the discovery of the Syriac Codex of the Gospels by Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson in 1892 at St. Catharine's Monastery.

study of that very Saviour's boyhood. But its origin lies buried in a time earlier than recorded history, and in a land that had not yet quivered under the trampling hosts of its consecutive conquerors, Assyrian, Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Syrian, Roman, a land won by this particular people from others by blood of conquest in the beginning, and sealed at length by the blood of their Saviour, crucified by a conqueror who set also a final[1] term to their national life.

[1] It is significant that the recent experiment aiming at restoring Jewish national life in Palestine should not only prove an expensive failure, but that it should actually fail through lack of enthusiasm and support on the part of the Jews themselves.

(*B*)

CLOSE TO THE ORIGINALS

I

THE NEW TESTAMENT

(*a*) Manuscripts

Once admit the principle that, on the whole, the nearer in time to the original the more correct a copied document is likely to be, then the superior value of early manuscripts becomes self-evident. And, in the case of the New Testament, such Greek Bibles have the very great added advantage of being in the original language. One speaks of manuscripts. Why use the plural? Surely, it will be asked, any single one would suffice?

No, it would not. For the simple reason that it is impossible to determine *which one*. After generations of copying, however conscientious, divergences have crept in through carelessness,

misapprehension and even well-intentioned correction of what appeared to be a mistake. If a boy at the head of a form will transcribe a page of Macaulay's Essay on Milton, and pass this manuscript to the next boy: if he, in turn, will copy and pass on his work alone to the next boy, and so through a succession of twenty, the resulting script will have diverged from the original in many particulars, more especially if a clever boy should begin to correct spelling and other apparent mistakes, and, where the writing is obscure, to reconstruct what he conceives to have been the author's original statement of thought. If, now, the master should ask the whole form, excluding the top boy, to build up for him the unknown original, the boys, in committee, would, I imagine, pay especial heed to the first copy as being more likely to be right. It would outweigh even a considerable agreement amongst other scribes, unless the first writer included a manifest absurdity in his work which had been corrected by some very knowing boy who followed. Where two or three renderings of a word appeared, similar in form, but differing in meaning, an inspired guess would be necessary; a guess taking some account of Milton's life and environment, and, even more, of Macaulay's style.

There, in effect, you have the problem that besets the scholar who tries to push his way back through the blank years that sever our fourth-or

fifth-century manuscripts from the lost original gospels and epistles. During those three hundred years copyists have been at work, totally out of touch with their predecessors, without power of consultation as to what an indistinct or difficult word might mean. Not only isolated differences but whole "schools" of differing texts have arisen.

Schools! But surely it would be sufficient to put these few manuscripts on a table! Few? There are from sixteen hundred to two thousand of them! Yes, two thousand Greek Bibles in more or less completeness. You may be thankful that we have enunciated the principle that the earlier they are, the more reliable!

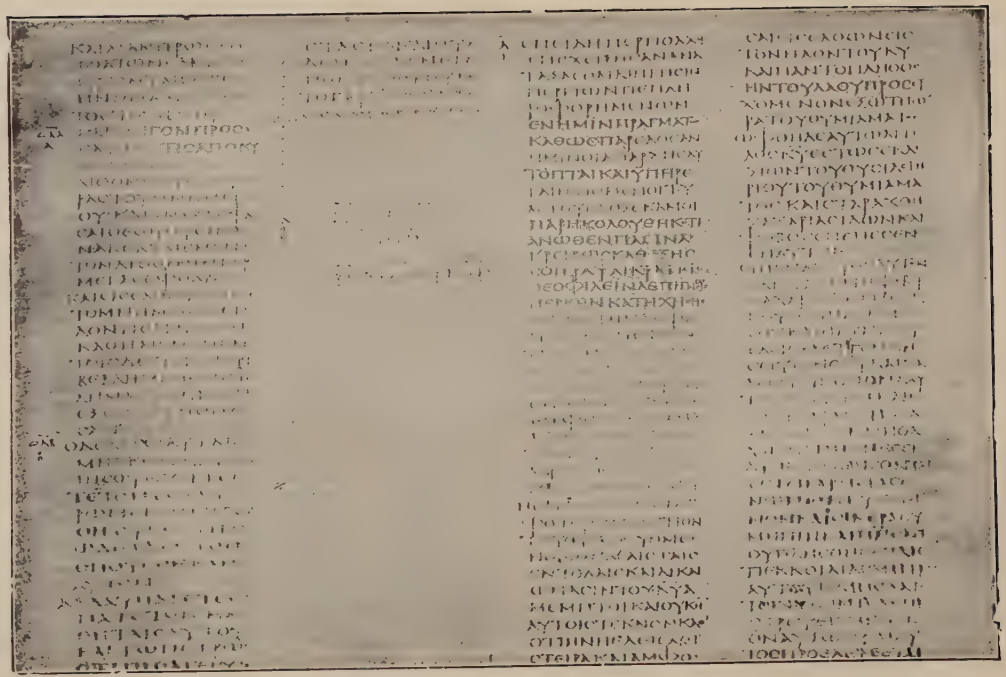
Making a first division, we classify them as *Uncials* (manuscripts written in capital letters) and *Cursives* (written in a running hand). The main battle is fought out among the Uncials, which number about one hundred. I shall touch on only five in any detail. Significantly they are the earliest in date. And, of them, two in particular constitute a court of almost final appeal, *if they agree*. If they differ, then the argument begins between their respective followings of scholars, and up are brought platoons of Uncials on either side, followed by battalions of Cursives, flanked with versions innumerable and venerable Early Fathers. Of these last two classes of combatants I have yet to speak. As the Cursives are mostly late, i.e., after A.D. 1000

they do not tell strongly, except the valuable one called Queen of the Cursives.

However, if the manuscripts B and Aleph agree (Aleph is the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet) and if, perchance, also A or C support them, the action is over except for the stragglers who maintain a guerrilla warfare.

Now for a few words concerning these five protagonists. You will realise that these authorities are chiefly of concern for the New Testament text. Their Greek Old Testament section, naturally, is secondary in importance to *Hebrew* manuscripts in matters pertaining to the Old Testament.

(i) *The Vatican Codex* (know as B) is probably by just a little the most reliable and valuable of all the fourth- and fifth-century manuscripts. It was the " favourite " of those great scholars Westcott and Hort when claims seemed equal. It is also esteemed the oldest of them all. It covers well over seven hundred leaves of finest vellum, each a foot square, and is bound in faded red morocco. It presents a complete New Testament (excepting from Hebrews ix. 14 onwards, i.e., about the last $\frac{1}{7}$ of the New Testament). Certain parts of Genesis and the Psalms are also missing, but do not concern us here. An interesting feature, though similarly irrelevant to our present purpose, is that it contains the apocryphal books, and contains them *intermingled* with the Old Testament books, a most unusual proceeding,



THE SINAITIC MANUSCRIPT

Photograph of one of the sheets found by Dr. Tischendorf in the old basket at St. Catharine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai.

(*Face page* 21.

and one quite at variance with the custom of the Hebrew canon.

This manuscript has been laboriously inked over by some tenth-century scribe, apparently for fear it should fade. It has lain in the Vatican at Rome for perhaps five hundred years, but was unfortunately not accessible for the translators of the Authorised Version. In fact, until quite recently, the authorities rendered it very difficult for anybody to make considerable study of it without interference. It can now, however, be seen in facsimile in many public libraries.

(ii) *The Sinaitic Codex* (known as Aleph) has an even more romantic history, which Dr. Tischendorf tells most dramatically in his booklet on the discovery. In briefest summary: It gains its name from Mount Sinai, where the eminent German scholar, Dr. Tischendorf, discovered it in 1859 after abortive attempts in 1844 and 1853. The sanctuary in which it lay hid was St. Catharine's Convent, at the foot of the mountain, and the Doctor's enthusiasm at catching sight of a few pages in 1844 so roused the suspicions of the monks that they refused to let him have more. After fifteen years, however, with the help of the Czar, he secured the treasure for St. Petersburg (now Leningrad). In 1934 it was purchased by the British Museum for £100,000, the government guaranteeing up to half that amount, the rest to be privately subscribed. It is on the finest of all vellum, i.e., that made from antelope skins.

Its supreme value for us is that, in addition to twenty-two books of the Old Testament and a couple of New Testament apocryphal books, it contains the *whole of the New Testament.*

Numerous illustrations of the power of these two manuscripts could be adduced. Two will suffice—a small and a great.

(*a*) Together with a few minor manuscripts and versions these two omit verse 47 of Matt. xii. That fact is quite sufficient for a distinguished commentator on Matthew's gospel. Says Dr. McNeile, without further qualification: "*This verse is absent from the true text*, Matthew having already summarized Mark's equivalent."[1] (*b*) A much more interesting and important illustration. If you turn to Mark xvi in your Revised Version, you will find a gap after verse 8, and this footnote: "The two oldest Greek manuscripts and some other authorities omit from verse 9 to the end. Some other authorities have a different ending to the gospel." We note that the Vatican and Sinaitic are the manuscripts referred to, and, in this case, the Sinaitic's testimony is the more valuable of the two. They both stop short at two Greek words ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ, (meaning "for they were afraid," or, more probably, "for they were afraid of . . .") the argument being that the documents the two scribes were copying, or the predecessors at some point in the chain, had lost the last page

[1] The italics are mine.

of the gospel, and thus broke off abruptly in the middle of a sentence, as any other book might, if similarly treated.

Now a lobster is not more apt at growing a new claw than a mutilated manuscript a new tail. (Witness the generous fashion of the equipment of "Edwin Drood.") At least two endings —one long, one short—were soon in being, and were doubtless known to the writers of our two manuscripts. It is almost possible to see these two men biting their quills over the knotty point. Of the two, "B" is the more pensive and undecided. He did not believe our present ending[1] genuine or he would have written it in forthwith. On the other hand he rather lacked the audacity to finish a gospel on a broken sentence. He bit his quill again, and left a space adequate to insert the doubtful quantum later if he changed his mind, or, rather, if he made it up. Then he went on with Luke's gospel at the other end of the blank. The blank, however, cannot possibly be accidental. Vellum was much too expensive, and no similar gap exists between Matthew and Mark.

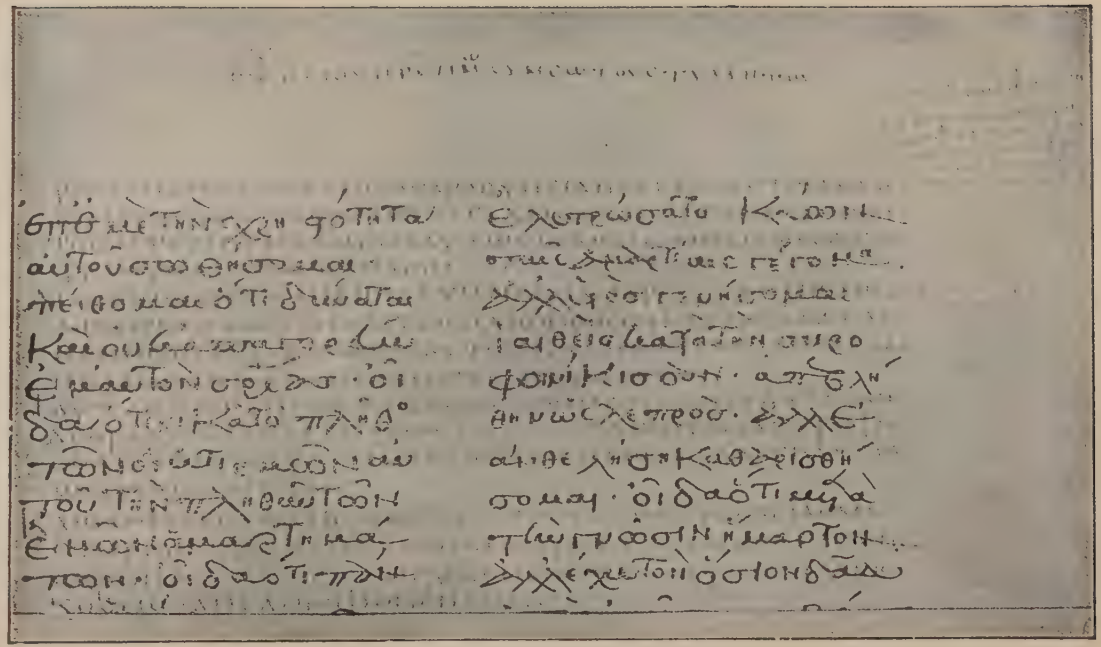
"Aleph," however, boldly breaks off his gospel at verse 8 and leaves no space for afterthoughts. Either he did not know of the suggested endings or he gave them short shrift. In any case he denied his sanction to either of them.

[1] The longer of the two.

These two alone, then, have been sufficient to cause the great scholars of the Revision Committee to discount the testimony of all the other manuscripts and versions, massed together, when they conflict with B and Aleph. For, coming from so naturally and rightly conservative a committee, the footnote in the Revised Version is of itself almost sufficient to discredit an ending which can be printed thus only after so significant a gap and footnote. Yet in the absence of absolute certainty the Revisers were right to print it and so to put the reader in possession of the facts.

(iii) We now turn to the *Alexandrian Codex* (A), not quite so venerable, but superficially interesting in that it belongs to England, and resides in the British Museum. Cyril Lucar, Patriarch of Constantinople, presented it to Charles I in 1628, just a few years too late for the Authorised Version. An Arabic inscription on the front announces that it was written by Thecla the Martyr. Of all the wildly improbable adventures of that romantic and somewhat legendary lady this would have been perhaps the most incredible!

For our purpose its chief defect is that it lacks the first twenty-four chapters of Matthew's gospel, two leaves from John's gospel and three from 2 Corinthians. As its name suggests, it came from Alexandria, where it reposed for more than five hundred years before it voyaged to



THE CODEX OF EPHRAEM

Notice under the more modern writing the fainter letters of the old Bible that have been rubbed out.

(*Face page* 25.

England, as narrated above. It has two columns to the page as against Vatican's three and Sinaitic's four.

(iv) With *Codex Ephræmi*, (C), we are faced with a really defective manuscript, but, considering its history, the amazing fact is that we have at least three-fifths of the New Testament, including parts of almost every book. This valuable manuscript suffered injury from some later admirer of Ephrem Syrus.[1] Vellum being expensive—his only excuse—he coolly scrubbed out the text of the New Testament that he might inscribe Ephrem's sermons upon the cleansed vellum. Fortunately for us, his ardour to begin the homily was so intense that he but partially erased the text, and it has been possible by careful application of chemicals to bring up the original uncial capitals. Such a manuscript is known as a Palimpsest or Rescript. It is by no means a unique phenomenon. Codex Z is such another. Codex C now lies in the Royal Library at Paris, having been brought thither by Catherine de Medici.

(v) Just one other manuscript must be touched upon briefly, the *Codex Bezæ* (D), presented to Cambridge University in 1581 by Theodore Beza, who had saved it from the sack of Lyons in 1562. It is written in Greek and Latin on opposite pages.

[1] Ephrem Syrus himself died in 373 and the MS. is much later than that.

If Aleph and B owe a little of their fame to a notable omission, D owes much of its own to a number of additions to the normal text, some of them of such sheer audacity as almost to escape any charge of invention. We shall the more readily accept the possibility of such additions being genuine if we remember that, from time to time, sayings of Jesus are being unearthed on tablets and papyri (cf. the famous Oxyrhynchus discoveries.[1]) They lend confirmation to the quaintly exaggerated declaration of John xxi. 25. Only the other year the discovery was reported by a French mission in S. Tunisia of a reputed rescript of Augustus which may well have provided the warrant for Pilate's execution of Jesus.[2]

But to return to D. The most famous interpolation is that which is inserted after Luke vi. 4, and even so careful a scholar as Dr. Westcott

[1] These "Sayings of Jesus," or recollections of sayings of Jesus, were discovered in 1897 and are of great interest. One of the most familiar is " Raise the stone and there shalt thou find me : cleave the wood and there am I." (Contrast Eccl. x. 9.)

[2] In *The Sunday Express*, March 9, 1924 (and reproduced in *Public Opinion* shortly after), I came across a paragraph reporting discovery in S. Tunisia, by the French Government's ethnological mission, of the following document: " To all Colonial Governors of the Roman Empire in Palestine and Near and Further Arabia :

" Prophets and religious revolutionists have arisen among the people. These prophets are not to be interfered with under the Roman law, except when their teachings are of such nature as to cause disturbance among the people. In such cases they are to be effectively suppressed.

" It is particularly desirable that these prophets be not allowed to interfere with the collection of taxes or with any other political affairs. (Signed) Augustus Cæsar."

So far, I have seen no further confirmatory details of this.

says: "It is evident that it rests on some real incident." Somehow, too, it "sounds like" Jesus. Here it is:

"The same day seeing a certain man working on the Sabbath He said to him—Man, if indeed thou knowest what thou art doing, happy art thou. But if thou knowest not thou art accursed and a transgressor of the law."

Well, that is something that only D records. D, however, is not strong enough evidence to stand alone, so you will not find the passage in your Revised Version.

Now where did "D" find it? We do not know—yet.

I am not going into the question of the Cursives. Few are individually famous, and in date they are considerably later than the Uncials. The main point about them is that, though, perhaps, belonging to the thirteenth or fourteenth century themselves, they may in many cases be first copies of quite ancient manuscripts that were then in existence.

It would be a safe statement that no two of these nearly two thousand manuscripts are identical. Nor is this remarkable when all the possibilities of human fallibility are considered, mis-reading, mis-hearing (if the copyist were working from dictation), mistaking a suggestion in the margin as intended for an insertion in the text, etc. Then, on top of that, to have abbre-

viations, diminution in size of words towards the end of a line, no spaces between words, so that the text ran on like an interminable worm winding across and across the page—all these vellum-saving devices made errors humanly inevitable.

Perhaps these are sufficient data to give an inkling of the obstacles to unearthing the correct text of the original books of the New Testament, and to offer a suggestion or two as to how scholars approach the task. At least, anyone who has read thus far will realise the absolute necessity of Biblical criticism, whose sole object is not the destruction of an existing Bible but the restoration of a lost one. Only, some people do not know that it is lost, nor that the Bible which they do enjoy is the fruit of the work of generations of devoted and scholarly critics.

(*b*) The Versions

There is, however, a second line of evidence to be brought up when the two thousand manuscripts have been exhausted or have produced a stalemate.

This consists of the Versions.

A manuscript, which literally means just something written by hand, has for Biblical study the technical significance of a writing in the *original* language. Thus, for New Testament work, a

document must be in Greek to be called a manuscript; for Old Testament purposes, in Hebrew.

A translation is a *version*. Such versions you find in Old Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Egyptian, Ethiopic, etc., their value consisting herein:—first, that, although they are in "foreign" languages, it is possible to make shrewd guesses as to the reading in the Greek manuscript from which they were translated; and, secondly, that that Greek manuscript would be in many cases a really ancient one. Certain Syriac and Old Latin versions are invaluable, as dating only fifty years or so from the originals. For *general* interest, however, one selects the Vulgate, a rendering of the whole Bible by Jerome of Bethlehem, about A.D. 385.[1] Jerome roused a storm parallel to that raised a generation or so ago by the Higher Critics, and he was as little perturbed. He called his detractors two-legged asses (*bipedes asellos*), charged them with mistaking ignorance for holiness, and went sturdily on his way. As Dr. Paterson Smyth says of the Vulgate: "It was called revolutionary and heretical . . . subversive of all faith in Holy Scriptures: it was

[1] The Old Testament was translated from the original Hebrew; the New Testament was a revision of existing Latin versions which he checked by comparison with Greek MSS. not greatly dissimilar to B. It should be emphasised, however, that in *critical importance* the Syriac and Old Latin versions are vastly superior to the Vulgate, and, even for general interest, the story of the rediscovery of the Sinaitic Syriac could almost match the story of Aleph, did space permit its reproduction. (See p. 14n.)

said to be an impious altering of the Word of God." We, too, have heard similar things of Biblical scholars in our day, but there is no need for temper. The truth in this matter is plain enough to the unbiased seeker.

In a short while Jerome's version was the Bible of the Church, and, by the time of the Council of Trent, over a thousand years later,[1] people had forgotten that it was a translation, and could with difficulty be led to recognise a Bible in Hebrew or Greek! In fact, they actually compared the Polyglot Bible, with its Hebrew, Vulgate, and Greek, in parallel columns, to the position of our Lord between two thieves!

Such are Time's revenges.

(c) The Fathers

The third line is a thinner one, consisting of quotations from Scripture made by Early Fathers of the Church, chiefly of the second, third and fourth centuries, in their theological writings. Unfortunately we have not even these in the originals, but only in distant copies.

As the quotations were often made from memory, manuscripts being rare, their accuracy suffered, and, with it, their usefulness to us. Also, of course, they, too, have suffered from copyists. "And yet," as Westcott and Hort will tell us,[2]

[1] The Council extended from 1545 to 1563.
[2] New Testament in Original Greek, p. 566.

" the quotations reveal to us with greater or less distinctness the texts of the Greek MSS. with which the Fathers were familiar, and such MSS. must have been at least as early as the Fathers who used them."

One Father notably free from inaccuracy is Origen, who quotes so carefully and generously that the Gospel text he was using can be reconstructed almost perfectly, revealing itself in places as almost identical with Aleph.

In general, too, we owe a great debt to the Fathers, in that their writings which are themselves easily dated serve as landmarks for identifying the age and time of appearance of the various types of text (conveniently known as Western, Alexandrian and Neutral). In this identification the writings of Origen again render outstanding service.

A few of the most notable " Fathers " are Clement of Rome (*c.* 90 A.D.), Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch (*c.* 110 A.D.), Justin Martyr (*c.* 150 A.D.), Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons and Tertullian (*c.* 180 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria (*c.* 200 A.D.), Origen (*c.* 220 A.D.), Eusebius (*c.* 320), Athanasius (*c.* 350), Augustine (*c.* 400 A.D.) and, of course, Jerome.

II

THE OLD TESTAMENT

THIS at first suggests an inverted picture of the New Testament. Instead of manuscripts steadily branching out like a tree from one to few and few to many,[1] we see here the many being conformed into a single standard which was then reproduced with almost the accuracy of printing. Instead of picking and choosing from a multitude of readings, we are denied the privilege of comparing this unified manuscript text with any rival save that rather poor thing, the Samaritan Bible (containing only the five Books of the Law) and a single important Greek version, i.e., the Septuagint (containing the whole O.T.).

This tendency towards standardisation began from the time when the Samaritan Bible parted company with the other. Whether this copy of the Jewish Law was taken by Manasseh, the renegade, when he fled to his Samaritan bride, or in some less romantic fashion, it certainly went. And the great divergence began. . The Jews

[1] It has to be remembered, however, that soon after A.D. 150, standardisation of New Testament texts also began, so that the Textus Receptus of the 16th century, (based on Lucian's revision at the end of the 3rd century as finally fixed at Byzantium) corresponds in a sense to the fixed Old Testament text produced by the Massoretes as a resultant of many revisions. But the New Testament manuscripts were not methodically and completely destroyed when superseded. That is the difference. They were allowed to go on propagating.

THE SAMARITAN ROLL AT NABLOUS

[*Face page* 33.

began hewing and whittling their text towards purity and ultimate uniformity. The Samaritans let theirs run to seed.

This period, then, the first century of the return from exile, some five hundred years before Christ, witnessed the beginning of a process of revision which was to lead in some fourteen or fifteen hundred years to the startling unification achieved by the Massoretes.

(*a*) *The growth of the main text* (*i.e.*, *Massoretic*). Massorah was the name of the great mass of oral tradition handed down within the college of the scribes. The word means The Tradition. The miraculous uniformity of the Jewish scriptures, the world over, to-day, whether they come from China or Africa, the Ghettoes of Italy or Spain, or in the shape of rough red goatskin rolls from black Jews in Malabar, can mean only one thing; i.e., a settlement of the text at some point earlier than our earliest surviving manuscript (i.e., about A.D. 950—1000), and a wiping out of all differing manuscripts so thoroughly that their discrepancies have never been revived. That was the work of the Massoretes, probably somewhere between the fourth or fifth and the tenth centuries A.D.[1] And we know that this elimination of the unfit was characteristic of the Jews, for a "Gheniza" was attached to syna-

[1] For anything like adequate treatment of this wide subject the reader is referred to *The Old Documents and The New Bible.*

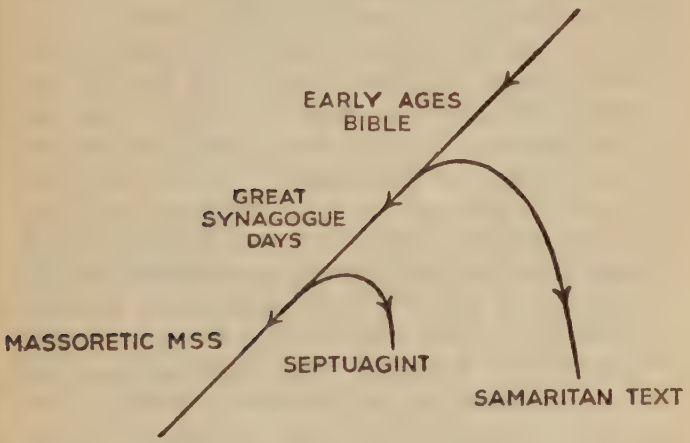
gogues for the reverent entombing of faulty "rolls" (Jewish scriptures were in the form of a double roll, and one read the requisite portion between the rolls).

The fifth century B.C. is important not only for the return of Ezra in one of the batches of exiles homing from Babylon, but for the tightening up of the guardianship of the Book of the Law (Pentateuch), and the Legend (?) of the Great Synagogue, which had at least a basis of fact in the muster-roll of the names of the returned leaders pledged to God and to purity in His service (cf. Ezra viii.). Ezra and the Great Synagogue after him seem to have completed the first Hebrew Bible and closed the Canon of the Law.

In its broad outline the question is surprisingly simple. The Early Ages Bible (explained below), is during the exile (586—536), welded into one whole, i.e., "The Law" (the first five books of our present Bible). This Book Ezra makes the centre of religious life in the restored community at Jerusalem. About this time a copy of this "Law" was stolen away to Samaria (originally inhabited by Israelites who were now become corrupted by intermarriage with the "heathen" and involved with idolatrous practices). From that time onward Samaritan–Jewish hatred inevitably kept the two Bibles apart. The Samaritan Law book therefore did not participate in the "Great Synagogue" activities of revision,

correction and watchful guardianship of literary purity.

About 280 B.C. the true stream was tapped yet again, and the famous Greek translation, i.e., the Septuagint, was made. The main stream then passed over the terrible rapids of the Syrian massacres of 168 B.C., the Roman destruction



of the Temple A.D. 70, and, half-a-century later, the final struggles at Bethur. For in all these the scriptures were severely handled, along with their guardian priests and scribes, very much as Christians and their scriptures were mingled in the fires of Diocletian's massacre; but the scriptures, as far as our knowledge goes, somehow emerged intact.

The foregoing chart makes clear the two divergences.

It is with just these three streams that we have to reckon.

Out of this national destruction of A.D. 70 arose one sole aspiration, i.e., to preserve the relics of national life, and, above all, to cherish the scriptures as the core of religious life. From A.D. 70 to A.D. 400 was the Talmud Period when the Mishna, or tradition on the Mosaic books, grew up and, together with it, the Gemara, or commentary on the Mishna. This was an unimaginative, laborious period, without humour or any sense of proportion. The College at Tiberias and its companions stood, nevertheless, for a scrupulous care and reverence for the original Torah (Law), although it was nevertheless steadily "snowing it under" with commentary, actually "making void the word of God by its tradition, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," as Jesus said in His day concerning like-minded scribes. "He that is learned in the scriptures," announced these Talmudic giants, "and not in the Mishna, is a blockhead. The Law was given to Moses by day, the Mishna by night. The Law is like salt, the Mishna like pepper, the Gemara like balmy spice." But, with all their faults, these scribes revealed a veneration for the scriptures amounting to fetichism, and for this we cannot be grateful enough. Rabbi Ishmael, warning a copyist, sums up their

attitude: "My son, take heed how thou doest this work, lest thou drop or add a letter to the manuscript, and so become a destroyer of the world." Some wisdom, too, they shewed. Here, for instance, are a few excerpts, of quaintly proverbial flavour, which show the Talmud at its best.

"He who marries for money, his children shall be a curse to him."

"The house that does not open to the poor shall open to the physician."

"Teach thy tongue to say, 'I do not know.'"

"If there is anything bad to say of you, say it yourself."

"Commit a sin twice and you will think it quite allowable."

Finally, to take two telling ones!

"Jerusalem was destroyed because the instruction of the young was neglected."

"The world is saved by the breath of the school-children. Even for the rebuilding of the Temple, schools must not be interrupted."

By A.D. 400, however, the Talmud period had merged into the Massoretic period, for Jerome's Vulgate is clearly taken from a Hebrew MS. of the same strain; one identical, in fact, with those uniform ones we have inherited from the scholars known as Massoretes.

Now that the Talmud or law commentary was concluded, it was time to collect the long-accumulating oral traditions as to how to read the text

of the whole Bible. This accumulation, put into writing, became the Massorah. The people who executed it were called Massoretes. Their most famous achievement, which must have taken at least a century, was the creation of the Massoretic vowels. This did much to stabilise and stereotype the text, and that, after all, was the chief object of the Massoretes.

Up till then Hebrew had been written only as a language of consonants. This meant, to take an English parallel, that a word WLL could be read as WALL, WELL or WILL. The sense was one's only guide, apart from having heard the passage read aloud in the synagogue or home. And that reading might have been right or wrong, however hallowed by time. Sometimes, too, the sense was not clear. Either "wall" or "well" might suit equally. It was thus that variations arose. The Massoretes prevented further variation without interfering with the consonant skeleton of the text. They instituted vowel points, i.e., dots and dashes and little T's that appeared above or below the consonants concerned.

According to Dr. Ginsberg, the Massoretic period came to a conclusion about A.D. 1000. The last of the great pundits to be enrolled were Aaron ben-Asher, as Principal of the College of Tiberias, and Jacob ben-Naphthali at Babylon. That was the end.

Just *what* had they achieved that bears on

PIECE OF A MASSORETIC MANUSCRIPT IN THE LIBRARY OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN
In which can be seen the Massorah notes in small Hebrew letters, fancifully shaped.

(*Face page* 38.

our purpose? They did not escape the petti-fogging detail of the Talmudists. In their efforts to ensure the correct transmission of the text by future copyists they covered the margins with such a variety of counsel (sometimes written in the shapes of animals or birds!), so many hints in doubtful places as to what they thought *ought* to be in the text, that sometimes confusion was worse confounded. They put weird marks on unusual words; recorded various readings; counted up the verses, the words and actually the letters of the books; even totted up how often the same word occurred at the beginning, middle or end of a verse.

But they did secure uniformity. Not only by vowel-pointing, but, one suspects, by suppression of all save that particular manuscript which they took as their chosen copy, was this end achieved. For all the Massoretic MSS. reveal the queer feature that is a ritual of Hebrew copyists, i.e., reproducing a crooked letter or a misformed word with unfailing exactness. The manuscripts that the Massoretes executed seem to have descended from one deliberately chosen parent. Whether that one was an Ezra Codex, or one of the Grand Synagogue productions, we cannot tell, but it would be exceedingly interesting to know.

In concluding the section I must quote from Dr. Paterson Smyth to illustrate the devotion exacted from these trained and drilled copyists,

the like of whom for accuracy the world has not seen before or since.[1] "They (the manuscripts) must be transcribed from an ancient and approved manuscript solely with pure black ink made of soot, charcoal and honey, upon the skin of a 'clean' animal prepared expressly for the purpose by a Jew. The sheets or skins are to be fastened together with strings made from the sinews of a clean animal. The scribe must not write a single word from memory, he must attentively look upon each individual word in his exemplar, and orally pronounce it before writing it down. In writing any of the sacred names of God he must solemnise his mind by devotion and reverence; before writing any of them he must wash his pen; before writing the Ineffable Name (JHVH) he must wash his whole body. The copy must be examined within thirteen days. Some writers assert that the mistake of a single letter vitiates a whole codex, others assert that it is permitted to correct three in any one sheet; if more are found the copy is to be condemned as profane."

People like that deserved to win. And they won. They standardised for ever the Jewish Scriptures.

We must notice, however, in somewhat greater detail, a few documents which in any sense might be considered as rivals of the Massoretic text.

[1] *The Old Documents and The New Bible*, p. 99.

In a very small degree they just take the perfect edge off the standardisation alluded to above.

The chief of these are:

The Samaritan Manuscript (*or Pentateuch*).

The Septuagint Version

Anything that can take us back a thousand years behind our Massoretic text, i.e., back to the time of Christ, is clearly too valuable to be overlooked in our enthusiasm for Massoretic thoroughness with its intolerance of divergence. The Talmud might have been much more helpful than it is but for the fact that its successive editions tended to keep pace with the Massoretic movement and to alter its text to suit the other. There are, too, certain Greek Bibles, notably those of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, which take us back to the second century A.D., the first of which, by mere virtue of the slavishness of its translation, might have been most serviceable had it come down to us complete. We should have had a witness to a good Palestine text at a period before the Massoretes were thought of. But what we have runs fairly parallel to the Massoretic, and thus provides corroboration of Massoretic reliability. Where it does not, it sometimes finds a useful echo in the Samaritan Bible or the Septuagint. Also, in the Bible linked with the name of Ephrem Syrus, we get a hint or so of the valuable Syriac Bible of A.D. 350.

(*b*) *The Samaritan Pentateuch* is largely of interest as having been kept apart from Jewish influences for nearly twenty-five centuries. In it is a reflection, though at times distorted by national bitterness and prejudice, of the Early Ages Bible before the Exile—a valuable corrective, therefore, to any drastic changes the Massoretes might have introduced in the first five books of the Old Testament. Yet for the most part it shows a surprising correspondence. And where it differs—well, what is the judgment?

Gesenius, that great Hebrew scholar, smashes any pretensions it might make to superiority. He shows that in practically every case of divergence it is obvious that the Samaritan has altered its wording through

(i) grammatical blunders of Samaritan scribes;

(ii) endeavours to smooth awkward passages;

(iii) wilful corruption of text to foster anti-Jewish prejudice.

The Samaritans as a race are nearly extinct, and their Bibles have dwindled with them. The first we knew of the existence of the Samaritan Bible at all was soon after A.D. 1600, when a traveller discovered one among the Samaritans of Damascus. In 1630 Archbishop Ussher obtained six more, and the total now numbers about fifteen, the most famous being that of the dying

Samaritan community of Nablous (Shechem), a jealously guarded document, and to be seen only on the Day of Atonement. It is written on the hairy side of skins of rams offered in sacrifice, the said skins being sewn together and forming the usual two-reel roll.

This encounter, then, leaves the Massoretic in undisputed possession. What of the last competitor?

(*c*) *The Septuagint* (*commonly written, LXX*).

This document, again, might have been vastly more useful, coming as it did before the stream had passed through the restricting Massoretic channel. Unfortunately, however, certain factors mitigate its claim to some extent.

(i) It has suffered the fate of copied documents that fall into the hands less scrupulous than those of Palestinian Jews.

(ii) To begin with, also, it came doubtless from the hands of Jews of the Dispersion at Alexandria. (By the term, Dispersion, we understand Jews resident abroad, and, to a large extent, in the case of Alexandria especially, sharing the breadth of vision and custom obtaining there.) Thus, the translation was carried out with a certain flair and abandon, a flourish and gesture, and, be it added, with a conspicuous ignorance of the finer shades of Hebrew idiom. Rather a free translation in the beginning, it has coarsened,

and become increasingly colloquial in the process of copying after copying.[1]

Highly coloured stories of its origin provide whimsical but unconvincing reading. There was Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt and lover of books, and he would have the Hebrew scriptures in translation to add to his collection. Aristeas was an officer of his, and tells the story. He tells it well, too, and without economy. By arrangement with Eleazar, the High Priest (the said arrangement partaking of fifty talents of gold and seventy talents of silver, and a *beau geste* consisting of the release of a paltry hundred and ninety-eight thousand Jewish captives therewith!), seventy-two distinguished Jewish scholars made the return journey, bearing manuscripts written in gold, and were regally received in Alexandria, gorgeously housed, whereupon they duly produced in seventy days the requisite translation into Greek. A still higher flight places them each in a cubicle of his own, in separate if honourable confinement, on the isle of Pharos, and each translation proved miraculously word-for-word the same!

More sober truth would have it, probably, that the Jews of Alexandria, losing touch more and more with their mother-tongue, realised the

[1] The Pentateuch is well and scrupulously translated, this fact indicating the superior reverence accorded to that part of scripture. The rest was much more haphazard, e.g., there are two versions of Judges and nothing to authorise one as against the other.

need of a Greek version to keep the mother-faith alive: but the work would not be done all at one time. Yet, when all is said and all allowance made for depreciation, it remains that this 280 B.C. version attained an extraordinary vogue, ousting the Hebrew not only in the "colonies" but to a large extent in the Palestinian motherland.

This document simply cannot be disregarded, since, though it may be questioned whether our Lord Himself used it, certainly Paul and the Evangelists did. We are driven to realise that it was the Bible of Christianity, that Philip expounded it to the treasurer of Candace, delineating with enthusiasm its fore-telling of Christ. It was in fact the only Bible of Christianity. When we are young—and often when we are old—we need to be reminded that Christianity preceded the New Testament, not proceeded from it: that Paul did not preach with a New Testament in his hand, but that one grew out of his preaching. Now, we may, from the fact that Paul's quotations are in agreement with it, deduce fairly that he was at least as well acquainted with the LXX as with his Hebrew text, Pharisee though he was. The evangelists also employ the LXX for 33 of the 37 excerpts from the Old Testament assigned to our Lord. Here and there this document unquestionably preserves a truer reading, and, in alliance with the Samaritan Pentateuch, it sometimes wins a fleeting victory over the Massorete. In numerous surviving copies it is still in the hands of the experts for

renovation, in an attempt to get back as nearly as possible to its original form.

It is interesting to remember that the Old Testament section of many Greek manuscripts—e.g., Vatican, Sinaitic, Alexandrian, and others—is the LXX, and these, therefore, come into the account in this connection.

At present, however, our tenth-century (A.D.) Massoretic text holds the lists, and not as some unchallenged tiro. Stronger far than that. It stands unassailable save in minute detail, stronger for having been challenged by these two adversaries; emerging from the ordeal without a stain on its character; leaving, withal, much dust of discredit upon theirs. It has little now to fear from the resurrection of any pre-Christian Hebrew manuscripts.

Taking our stand then in England, the England of Edmund Atheling, the "dear deed-doer" and hero of the great victory of Brunanburgh, when Bible-making or Bible-translating had already stirred the blood of more than one Englishman (notably the Venerable Bede and King Alfred the Great) and was going to thrill many more—what would be the position? What of materials? Dotted about the world in monasteries, convents, abbeys, in strong-boxes, cupboards, libraries of Europe, Asia Minor and North Africa, were at least the five great Uncials and their trains of vassals, at least the great bodyguard of Cursives,

the army of versions in early Christian languages, the limping camp-follower quotations in works of Early Fathers. And there was the Vulgate. All this for New Testament work. And how much more! How many since-perished manuscripts might then have been found and possibly preserved for posterity?

For the Old Testament, again, there existed at least that one tenth-century Massoretic Hebrew manuscript—and how many others? together with the Septuagint, Samaritan texts in less deteriorated condition than now, the Vulgate and other versions. If only modern scholars had been there, knowing what to look for and where to look!

But when first Caedmon and Cynewulf, then Bede and Alfred, rose up to receive each in his own way the vision of an English Bible for Englishmen, each stood gazing like the conquistador on a peak of Darien, viewing the strange sea, and realised that he must launch out in the little skiff he had—adventuring.

The next thousand years witness the awakening to the possibilities, and we must mark that awakening along the successive stages that lead up to our Revised Version. And we must note the use each successive pioneer made of the materials which we know were lying hid, awaiting discovery and employment. Seen aright, it has been a romantic adventure, not only to give each country the best possible Bible in the

mother-tongue, but incidentally to stumble gradually back somehow, by arduous toil, nearer and nearer to those long-lost original books which would, could they have survived, have saved a mort of pain and argument. But they have not. And God has allowed it.

After all, "It is the Glory of God to conceal a thing, but the glory of Kings is to search out a matter."[1] And Another spoke even more authoritatively than "Solomon": "For nothing is hid that shall not be made manifest nor secret that shall not be known and come to light"[2] —a principle which has surely more than a local significance in Christ's mind. The comfort is that things are *meant* to be discovered, soon or late. And we honour God most who love His truth sufficiently to desire it with heart, and soul, and strength—and mind.

[1] Proverbs xxv, 2. [2] Luke viii 17.

(C)

THE FORWARD JOURNEY

I

EARLY ENGLISH BIBLES

First, one must notice Caedmon, born at Whitby, the town which witnessed the historic confluence of the two great Christianising agencies in Britain. A great religious conference was summoned at Whitby by King Oswy in A.D. 664, to settle the methods in dispute concerning the dating of Easter. Here then had met the Celtic and Roman, the monastic and the episcopal. The Celtic Church dated back to St. Columba, who had left his Irish home to go in 561 as missionary to Hy (Iona), where he succeeded in converting Brude, King of the Picts, and spent six years founding monasteries like a chain of fortresses to hold hardly-won heathendom for the Christian faith. He died in 597, the very year of Augustine's landing in Kent with the Roman mission. At the time of the

synod of Whitby the situation geographically was:

Bernicia (Durham, Northumberland, and East Scotland to Firth of Forth):— Strongly Ionic, i.e., Celtic

Deira (Yorks); Mercia (Midlands); Essex:— Moderately Ionic

Wessex (south-coast counties, with Surrey):— Moderately Roman

Kent and East Anglia:— Strongly Roman

Oswy was king of Bernicia, so that the omens might have seemed propitious for the north despite the warning proverb, "Put not your trust in princes," but for the fact that Oswy's queen was in the wrong camp.

The protagonists were Hilda of Hartlepool, and Colman of Lindisfarne, for the Celts; matched against Eanfled (the Queen), Alchfrid of Deira, James the Deacon, and Agilbert of Dorchester, together with the subsequently famous Wilfrid.

The discussion did not greatly clear the way, but a chance remark of Wilfrid's about the Apostle Peter holding the keys proved too much for Oswy's presidential impartiality, for he came down heavily and at once on the safe side. Whereas Peter was admitted the foundation saint of Rome, Colman could claim no correspondingly supreme honour for Columba. When the Easter decision was promulgated throughout

Northumbria (Bernicia and Deira) Colman and thirty monastic bishops resigned.

So "unity" was imposed without consent upon English Christianity. But Bede, Roman in his loyalty though he was, could not view with favour the supersession of the beautiful and selfless type of Christianity for which Iona had stood, and which steadily withered in the Anglican Church. As Dr. Hodgkin expresses it: "In Columba, Aidan, Colman and their disciples we seem to see something of that absolute indifference to wealth, that kinship with Nature and her children, that almost passionate love for Poverty and the Poor which, six centuries later, was to shed a halo round the head of Francis of Assisi. These men were zealous missionaries, 'humble and holy men of heart'; the men who were about to replace them in the organised and regularly affiliated church, though by no means devoid of missionary zeal nor of the spirit of self-denial, were, before all, great ecclesiastics and lordly rulers of the church."[1]

Such was the setting in which Caedmon lived at Whitby, Caedmon who heard, whilst sitting in a cow-byre, the command of a heavenly visitor to sing "the beginning of things, the going forth out of Egypt, the suffering and resurrection of the Lord." Thus our English Bible began with a poetic utterance (what would have been called by the Jews of the Talmud

[1] *Political History of England*, I. 187.

period a Targum or paraphrase) of the great cosmic and Christian epics in scripture.

Later criticism has assigned to other hands many of the poems once attributed to Caedmon, but enough is assured to secure Caedmon's name as the fountain-head of English poetry. According to King Alfred, he responded to his vision with words like these:

"Now must we praise
The grandeur of Heaven's Kingdom,
The Creator's might,
And his mind's thought;
Glorious father of men,
The Lord the Eternal,
Who formed the beginning,' etc.

And, of the Cross:

"He on the tree ascended
And shed his blood,
God on the cross
Through the Spirit's power.
Wherefore we should
At all times
Give to the Lord thanks
In deeds and works
For that he us from thraldom
Led home
Up to heaven
Where we may share
The greatness of God.[1]"

[1] Thorpe's *Caedmon's Paraphrase*. Society of Antiquaries, London, 1832.

Cynewulf, with whom we must pause but a short space, was also a Northumbrian, and is supposed to have been the author of the beautiful lines now carved on Ruthwell Cross, Dumfriesshire. Here the poet dreams of the cross when it was still a tree in the forest, then as it is fashioned into a cross for criminals, and finally as receiving the Holy Lord. The Rood speaks:

> "Then the young hero who was mightiest God,
> Strong and with steadfast mind,
> Up to the Cross with steps unfaltering trod,
> There to redeem mankind.
> I trembled but I durst not fail,
> I on my shoulders bare the glorious King.
> They pierced my sides with many a darksome nail,
> And on us both their cruel curses fling." [1]

The death, burial and resurrection of Our Lord follow in similar strain, and the command to the dreamer to deliver the message to the world.

As already noted, these are in no sense Bible translations, but they illustrate how vividly the gospel story affected the warrior-mind of the day. They declare the soil receptive. And such a man as Cynewulf, born but a few years before Bede's death, shows that the ebb in religious emotion was not by any means universal, though serious enough to cause that great English-

[1] Taken as it stands from *The Political History of England*, Vol. I.

man, Bede, such anxious moments. He writes of the bishops that they retain dioceses larger than one man could possibly administer, that they clutch eagerly at lucre, and think more of the shepherd's hire than of feeding the flock. "There are many farms and villages on lonely mountains or in brambly wildernesses, in which for many years the face of a priest has never been seen, and neither baptisms nor confirmations are ever performed, and yet none of the dwellers in such places is ever allowed to escape from the payment of church dues."[1]

Sufficient has been said, however, to make it comprehensible that Bede should devote his dying hours to giving Englishmen the gospel of John in their own language. For, when all is said of its Alexandrine philosophy and its historical difficulties, it is spiritually still the most wonderful book in the world, bearing a message clear to the child-mind of all centuries.

One of the greatest Englishmen, famous for his *Ecclesiastical History*, *Interpretation of Scripture*, *Nature of Things*, etc., all written in beautiful Latin prose, Bede yet turned in his last hours to write in Anglo-Saxon for Englishmen that translation of the Vulgate John.

The atmosphere of his closing hours may be symbolised by the psalms sung by his adoring disciples and the recitation of some of his own

[1] Dr. Hodgkin gives an even more lamentable picture. (Lib. cit.).

Anglo-Saxon verses. I take the translation of one of the latter from Dr. Hodgkin:

> "Let not man take thought too deeply
> Ere his last and lonely journey.
> Ponder as he may, he knows not
> What of good and what of evil
> Shall befall his parting spirit."

Thanking God for all his experiences, he murmured: "As Ambrose said, so can I say too, 'I have not so lived that I need be ashamed to abide longer with you; yet neither do I fear to die, for we have a good Lord.'"

Between disciples' songs, which soothed his laboured breathing when he leaned back for respite, he was diligently finishing his gospel, dictating it to an amanuensis. As he said touchingly: "I do not want my lads to read that which is false, nor that after my death they should spend further labour on this thing."

It was, we repeat, a copy of the Vulgate he was translating. So far as we know, he had nothing else to compare with it.

The lad said to him: "There is yet one chapter of the book—but I think it is too hard for thee."

But Bede answered: "No, it is easy; take up thy pen and write quickly."

Then he distributed his little treasures among them—spices, napkins, incense. There remained but the last sentence to indite.

"It is done," cried the scribe.

"Thou hast said truly," assented Bede. "It is finished. Help me to sit in yonder place where I have been wont to pray, that sitting there I may call upon the name of the Father." And thus on Ascension Day, 735, chanting with difficulty the Gloria Patri at the window of his cell, passed away not only the Father of English history but the Father of the English Bible.

Next in this Anglo-Saxon section stands Alfred, whose patriotic wish has been so often quoted, "that all the freeborn youth of his kingdom should employ themselves in nothing till they could first read well the English Scripture." And, if this was to be so, it was necessary that he and others should bestir themselves. For dependence on a class of priests who should mediate the Vulgate to the people was grown precarious. In a preface to his translation of Pope Gregory's *Regula Pastoralis*, Alfred writes: "Formerly men came from beyond our borders, seeking wisdom in our own land; now, if we are to have it at all, we must look for it abroad. So great was the decay of learning among Englishmen that there were very few on this side Humber, and I ween not many north of it, who could understand the ritual (i.e., Mass) or translate a letter from Latin into English. No, I cannot remember one such, south of the Thames, when I came to the throne." And that was A.D. 878 —one hundred and forty years after the death of Bede.

Pursuing his policy of replenishment, he invited Asser from Wales (who became his biographer), Plegmund from Mercia (who became Archbishop of Canterbury), and so on. Himself, he translated notable books besides the *Regula*, chief among them Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*. And he set himself to enrich the English Bible.

Alfred's Dooms (Laws) found themselves upon, and commence with, a translation of Exodus xx—xxiii, i.e., the Ten Commandments and the Mosaic code of civic law, simple and stern. The *lex talionis* (law of retaliation—"an eye for an eye") is therein enshrined, to be modified later by a reference to Christ, "the Lord's Son, our Lord, who is Jesus Christ, who came into the world not to destroy the law but to fulfil it and to increase it with all good things. With mild-heartedness and humility did He teach."

Then follows Acts xv, with the story of the Council at Jerusalem, debating whether Jewish regulations were applicable or not to Gentiles. And the Council is made by Alfred to end up with the Golden Rule, in the negative form in which Codex Bezæ gives it, and which is missing in our other manuscripts (an interesting point): "And that which ye will that other men should not do to you, do not ye to other men." The king continues: "On this one doom let each man meditate that he may judge each one

rightly; nor needs he any other law-book. Let him seek for no other doom upon his neighbour than he would be willing to have pronounced upon himself."

But he did commute the death penalty for most of the offences under the Mosaic code, substituting money payments—excepting only treason, that, he claims, being God's obvious ordinance, since "His Son could not give any such remission to the traitor who delivered Him to death."

He also translated the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms, but, like Bede, died amid the effort of his task.

There are, about the close of the tenth century, other translations of varying importance, such as that of Archbishop Aelfric, but most of these were obviously designed more for reading in Church than for distribution amid even such laity as could read. The only Anglo-Saxon version of the four gospels, now extant, was made somewhere within the last quarter of the tenth century. No other New Testament translations appear to have been done in this period. This version is in the late West-Saxon dialect, and its authorship is unknown, though its place of origin may well have been Bath. There is a manuscript of this translation in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, which Prof. Skeat dates at about A.D. 1000. There is a second in the

Bodleian Library at Oxford and a third in the British Museum, both of these dating also round about A.D. 1000. A fourth, dating about A.D. 1050, is in the University Library at Cambridge. Three others, one of which contains but a fragment, are also in existence, but are later work.

Of the main four, the first contains this trifle of identification: "I, Aelfric, wrote this book" (i.e., the copy) "in the monastery at Bath and gave it to Brihtwold the prior." This sentence appears at the end of Matthew's gospel. The fourth, too, has this terse note at the end of John's Gospel: "Wulfwi me wrote."

The version was of course a translation from the Latin.

We now pass on to Wyclif and his still greater successor, Tyndale, whose common object it was to dispense with mediation of priests in the matter, and, as the latter put it, "to make the boy that drives the plough in England to know more of Scripture than the Pope does."

II

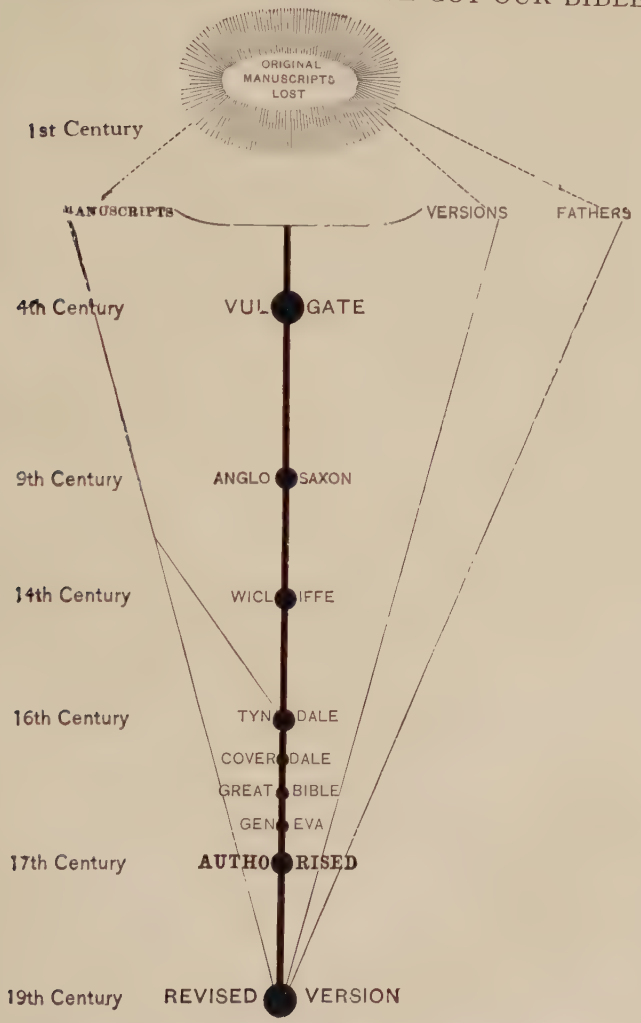
WYCLIF

It is perhaps unnecessary, and yet exceedingly tempting, to compare these greatest two figures in the history of the English Bible. With Wyclif the translation of the Bible was one of the many projects of an ecclesiastical statesman; with Tyndale it was an all-absorbing life passion. In Wyclif's day it is doubtful if Bible translation alone would ever have endangered a man's life. Rather was it his antagonism to "possessioners" in high places that brought him to trial before Bishop Courtenay. And Lancaster stood by him in the crisis. Not (one must again deduce) from mere motives of affection for Wyclif. Wyclif's was not a nature that commanded love. Rather, indeed, was Lancaster moved by hatred of Courtenay, at whom he cast his insolence in the latter's own cathedral during the Wyclif trial.[1]

It is sheer waste of time to attempt any pic-

[1] Dr. H. B. Workman in his masterly work upon Wyclif, representing twelve years of patient investigation on the part of a great historian, sums up the Lancaster-Wyclif alliance: "Politics make strange bed-fellows, and men of opposite

DIAGRAM SHOWING HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE



(1) Contents of Original Manuscripts (now lost) survive in the existing MANUSCRIPTS, VERSIONS, and FATHERS.

(2) The Latin Vulgate is the source of our English Versions before Tyndale. He first draws from *manuscript* sources but of rather modern date.

(3) The three sources—MANUSCRIPTS, VERSIONS, and FATHERS -are all combined for the first time in the Revised Version.

(*Face page* 60.

ture of Wyclif and his Biblical activities without a true historical background. Whilst Ball[1] preached his crude socialism to villeins, Wyclif was at the Balliols' foundation at Oxford. Thereafter he deliberately adopted the tongue of the Midlands instead of the shire dialect of Yorkshire, became first a teacher of scholastic philosophy, then a powerful preacher. He was a born fighter who developed into a political statesman. He briefed himself against the "possessioner" monks and the forsworn friars who so conveniently forgot their poverty vows. From an anti-abuses politician he became King's ambassador, having also acquired a doctorate in divinity. That is the unique man he was. As Professor Tout[2] says of him and his age:

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opinions find themselves fighting side by side. That Lancaster should seek the services of Wyclif is not strange; that the Reformer should have allowed himself to be made the tool of a man with whom he had scarcely anything in common is deplorable. The one link between the two was hostility to the power or wealth of the hierarchy." And again: "Wyclif, on the other hand, by thus allying himself with an unscrupulous politician, lost the support of the people. His movement of reform, which at one time might have become national in scope, became identified with various cross-currents in politics, and was lowered by its associations with the selfish aims of a clique." *John Wyclif*, Vol. I, pp. 275, 279.

[1] According to Netter, Ball "publicly confessed that for two years he had been a disciple of Wyclif and had learned from him the heresies he taught." "No credence," says Dr. Workman (Vol. II, p. 237), "need be attached to such a confession, of which we hear nothing until twenty years later, and which bears the marks of a weapon made to order."

[2] *Political History of England*, Vol. III, p. 427. This statement finds corroboration in Dr. Workman's book (Vol. I, p. 3): "Nor

"The cosmopolitanism of the earlier Middle Ages was everywhere on the wane. A modern nation had arisen out of the old world-state and world-spirit. In the England of Edward III, Chaucer and Wyclif, we have reached the consummation of the movement whose first beginnings we have traced in the early storms of the reign of Henry III."

English failures in the French war involving not only Pembroke but also John of Gaunt, largely due to the stinting of supplies to the expeditionary force, led in 1375 to the inconclusive truce of Bruges, Wyclif having repaired thither in 1374 as a royal commissioner. It was this truce that brought John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, back to England in a huff.[1] Here, as Loserth has satisfactorily shown, was the beginning of Wyclif's political career. No sooner were these two men back than they set about the "possessioners." Edward III was lost in debauched senility, but Lancaster, gaining the

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should we forget that Wyclif stands half in and half out of the Middle Ages. The century in which he lived was a transition age. The old order was breaking up . . . Wyclif was one of the few men who realised the issue."

[1] "Wyclif returned from Bruges a disillusioned man. The war in France was abhorrent to him. In a work that he was then writing he breaks through his usual reserve to protest that 'the Great Company devastating France is hateful to God.' The hollowness of the long negotiations would be borne in upon him. So Wyclif seems to have contemplated abandoning politics, preferring to fall back upon his academic position for the advancement of his ideas, to which henceforth, as he tells us, he would devote his life."—Workman: *John Wyclif*, Vol. I, p. 257.

ear of the all-powerful Alice Perrers, strengthened his party with Lords Latimer and Neville, and finally summoned Wyclif away again from his Oxford class-room to proclaim in London pulpits the ungodliness of earthly-minded prelates who grasped at temporal power.

The ring was set and the fight begun.

On February 19, 1377, Wyclif appeared before Bishop Courtenay to answer for being a pestilent fellow. Four "mendicant" doctors of divinity had been briefed by Lancaster to defend Wyclif against the "possessioners." The defendant was further strengthened by Lancaster in person, and by Percy the Marshal. The Lady Chapel of the cathedral was packed. The Marshal endeavoured to dragoon the crowd. Courtenay denied his authority to do so. Percy declared that his writ ran anywhere. Lancaster taunted Courtenay still further, and, at Courtenay's retort, showed his teeth, muttering: "I would rather drag him out of his church by the hair of his head than put up with such insolence." This was the last straw to a crowd which, hating Lancaster and adoring Courtenay, was already nervous of the security of its rights. Next day Lancaster's house was attacked by the mob, and Percy's sacked. Finally the old king was roused from lethargy to pour oil on the waters. But the upshot was that Wyclif remained unmolested and powerful, the while his enemies laid plans and conspired with the papal curia.

It is true to say, as Professor Oman shows,[1] that Wyclif, who spoke mainly to the nobility and upper classes, had but little influence on the peasants. Their revolt was almost entirely social, and evinced no particular religious flavour. It was in other ways that Wyclif brought clerical opposition upon himself: (1) by his attack on "possessioners"; (2) and still more forcibly, through being actively linked with the laity faction; and (3) because he was first and last an aggressive fighter who would not be stilled.

He was a marked man, then, long before he turned to Bible translation, and anything he did was apt to be opposed just because he was anti-"possessioner" and anti-papal, and, later, positively anti-clerical. He was a definite leader of reformation, and came within a little of antedating the Reformation by nearly two centuries.[2] But he was sometimes incautious and unsafe as

[1] *Great Rebellion of* 1381, pp. 19 and 101. If, however, Wyclif's direct influence on the revolt were negligible, and the indirect chiefly due to his encouragement of confiscation in the matter of Church property, the counter-influence of the crushing of the revolt upon Wyclif's fortunes was immediate. "Wyclif's alliance with John of Gaunt was ended, his political influence was gone, his policy of disendowment dead."—*John Wyclif* (Workman, Vol. II, p. 236).

[2] His influence upon the reformers is well indicated by a picture in the Bohemian Psalter vouched for by Buddensieg, where Wyclif is represented as striking the spark, whilst Hus kindles the coals, and Luther waves the lighted torch. At the trial of Hus the hands are the hands of Hus, the voice is the voice of Wyclif. The latter was twice in Bohemia, despite the prayer of the Czech scribe, as he revolted from transcribing Wyclif's *De Christo et suo adversario Antichristo*. "Oh good God, do not let this man come into our beloved Bohemia."

a thinker, more destructive than constructive in disposition.[1]

Concerning his attitude to the Bible, however, I think we must absolve him from such a charge. For his ideas, though revolutionary enough, have proved to be both sound and positive. In such an age as his it is amazing to hear voiced principles so daring as that every man has a right to examine the Bible for himself and that the Scriptures are to be considered as a whole, not taken piecemeal in phrases separate from their context. His clarity of perception, too, is displayed in his denunciation of the claim that doctrines and ordinances of the church, together with papal bulls, are to be held as of equal authority with the Scriptures. His contention is single: "To be ignorant of the Scriptures is to be ignorant of Christ." It is unfortunate,

[1] Dr. Workman has an excellent paragraph on the first page of his book: "As a schoolman he was the acknowledged leader among his contemporaries at Oxford. As a politician he voiced for some years the national aspirations or rather the national dissatisfaction. As a reformer he promulgated ideas that would have destroyed the medieval Church. . . . This triple combination gives the secret of the strength as well as of the weakness of Wyclif's revolt." Also (on p. 6): "Throughout the fourteenth century the student will discern two movements in England, both tending in the same direction . . . the one attack, the more popular and influential, was directed against the temporal and political power of the clergy; the other attack, enterprised by the few, was set against the dogmas and superstitions of the Church. The two movements . . . for a short time were united under one leader. This leader was John Wyclif." Again: "As a reformer he is not comparable in the permanence of his work either with Hildebrand at the one extreme or with Luther at the other."

nevertheless, that when it came to the actual translation of the Bible (primarily for clergy and nobility but ultimately with an eye to all classes) he left the work to assistants, over whom his supervision must have been one of general inspiration rather than detailed direction if comparative styles are any criterion. His two principal lieutenants among the " many good fellows and cunnyng " were Nicholas de Hereford and John Purvey. Hereford had actually wrought the translation of the Old Testament as far as Baruch iii. 21, when the hand of reactionary authority fell upon him for his lollardy, and summoned him as a heretic to be tried at the Blackfriars (June, 1382).

At previous sessions (May, 1382), one of which was nearly stampeded by a seismic shock, twenty-four Conclusions, extracted from Wyclif's writings had been solemnly condemned, though their author did not appear to answer in person. Hereford duly reported himself on June 18, but, on his failure to respond to his name and denounce these Conclusions on July 1, he was excommunicated. He appealed to Rome, and fled overseas in time to escape arrest. Of him we hear no more.

John Purvey (or Perney), secretary and follower of Wyclif, completed Hereford's version about 1383, and almost immediately began a revision of this joint work. For many years, at intervals, he suffered persecution, including torture; and,

eventually, like Aston, Repingdon and other lollards, was driven to some measure of recantation —in his case only a temporary accommodation.

Wyclif, however, fulminated with polemical vigour and intransigence to the end. Foxe's story, typical of Wyclif, for all that Foxe utters it with a caution, is worth reproducing: "When Wyclif was lying very sick at London certain friars came unto him to counsel him; and when they had babbled much unto him, Wyclif, being moved with the foolishness and absurdity of their talk, with a stout stomach, setting himself upright in his bed, repeated the saying out of the Psalms: 'I shall not die but I shall live and declare the works of the Lord.'" Which he did for some while longer, adding also to his translations of passages of the New Testament which we find with appropriate exposition in his *Sermons*. It was always a passage or chapter, never an isolated text, that he preached upon. His work shows an incisiveness and a flair for idiom which make us regret that it did not take the place of the pedantic periods of Hereford's somewhat clumsy paraphrase. Purvey's work provides a quite virile and inspiring piece of fourteenth century English, including such notable renderings as 2 Tim. ii. 4: "No man holding knighthood unto God wlappith himself with worldli nedes."

In 1384, amid a vortex of hatred, Wyclif sank into the grave, one monkish chronicler writing:

"On the feast of the passion of St. Thomas of Canterbury, John

Wyclif, the organ of the devil, the enemy of the church, the idol of heretics, the image of hypocrites, the restorer of schism, the storehouse of lies, the sink of flattery, being struck by the judgment of God was seized with a palsy . . . and that mouth which was to have spoken great things against God and His saints was miserably drawn aside . . . and his tongue was speechless, and his head shook, showing plainly that the curse which God had thundered forth against Cain was also inflicted upon him."

A venomous epitaph! but he was not allowed to rest even in his tomb. His bones were dug up and cast to the waters of the Swift at Lutterworth by decree of the Council of Constance some forty years after his death.[1]

Purvey, however, ere Wyclif died, was already at work upon the revision which he probably completed about 1395.[2] The two versions attained quite a fair circulation despite the fact that each copy had to be laboriously inscribed by hand, but the inevitable cost prevented it reaching the hands of the poor. A bill was introduced to prevent its circulation, but John

[1] In 1415, the year of Hus's arraignment and consequent martyrdom at the stake, Wyclif was indicted by the same council on two hundred and sixty counts. In 1427 as the instructions had not been carried out, Pope Martin V sent peremptory orders, and Bishop Fleming—at one time suspected of lollard leanings—was compelled to carry out the sentence.

[2] About 30 copies of Hereford's work survive and 140 of Purvey's. Dr. Workman suggests a new nomenclature to clear up confusion (*Wyclif*, II, 177, Note IV): "There are really 3 versions. First the paraphrase. This we would call Hereford's inasmuch as he had the chief share . . . second, Wyclif's own partial New Testament in his *Sermons*. This has never yet been separately printed. This we would call Wyclif's. The third should be known as Purvey's." The following approximate dates might perhaps be assigned for their respective *completions*; 1383, 1384, 1395.

of Gaunt protested the right of the people to a Bible in their own tongue. Then Archbishop Arundel countered by denouncing to the Pope the "pestilent wretch, John Wyclif, the son of the old serpent, etc.", and the Convocation of Canterbury prohibited further activity on the part of the translators. Later, indeed, people were burned with their copies hanging round their necks.

In the Prologue to his revision Purvey reveals both a humble spirit and a clear conception of the demands of the work. It runs:

"A simpel[1] creature hath translated the Scripture out of Latin into Englische. First, the simpel creature had much travayle with divers fellows and helpers to gather many old Bibles and other doctors and common glosses to make one Latin Bible somedeal true[2] and then to study it anewe, the texte with the gloss and other doctors as he might get, and especially Lyra on the Old Testament, which helped full much in this work.

The third time to counsel with olde grammarians and divines of hard words and hard sentences how they might best be understood and translated, the fourth time to translate as clearly as he could the sense, and to have many good fellows and cunnying at the correcting of the translacioun. . . . A translator hath great nede to studie well the sense both before and after, and then also he hath nede to live a clene life and be full devout in preiers, and have not his wit occupied about worldli things that the Holy Spyrit, author of all wisdom and cunnynge and truthe, dresse him for his work and suffer him not to err . . . God grant to us all grace to ken well and to kepe well Holie Writ, and to suffer joiefulli some paine for it at the laste."

[1] A favourite epithet of Purvey's and of lollards in general.

[2] Indicating the corruption of the Vulgate and the multiplicity of readings. This is the last translation to be based solely or almost entirely upon the Vulgate.

III

THREE CONSIDERABLE EVENTS BETWEEN WYCLIF AND TYNDALE

Between Wyclif and Tyndale occurred events in the world of Bible translation comparable in the physical world only to earthquake, volcanic eruption, and cyclone. For Tyndale there now existed a landscape of utterly new landmarks, a world which to Wyclif would have been as amazing as our modern world with its scientific discoveries would have been to Tyndale.

(*a*) *The Discovery of Printing.* The far-reaching importance of this scarcely needs emphasising. Where the Bible had had to be laboriously copied, with all the liability to error that the method involves, Bibles could now be broadcast in ever-growing numbers. The printing-press conquered the persecutor. The printer could defy the burner of Bibles. The printing-press left the destroyer winded and gasping, unable to cope with the flood, helpless as Canute would have found it to thrust back the tide with naked hands.

The account of John Gutenberg's youthful discovery is probably legendary, though that can in no way interfere with the historical fact that he did invent printing. It is said that as a boy this Johann Gensfleisch (John Gooseflesh) was fond of carving letters out of the smooth bark of trees, and manipulating them into words. His mother was a dresser of parchments, and had a fine white skin laid out in process of preparation for manuscript work. By evil chance—or good—a pot of purple dye stood also by the fire, and into it young master Johann must needs drop one of his precious letters. As quickly he whipped it out again, but the dye was hot and he dropped the letter—of course on to the white skin, and a beautiful purple impression ensued! At any rate, thirty years later, Johann Gutenberg (late Gensfleisch), son of Frilo Gensfleisch and Elsie Gutenberg, had invented his printing machine, and, beyond any question, in 1450 turned out from his press in Mentz the Mazarin Bible, a Latin version based on the Vulgate. By 1454 movable type had been invented. What this signified of revolution can be best appreciated if I remark that a modern firm will turn out nearly two hundred copies to the hour against the laborious ten months per copy of Wyclif's day. Printing also met the second great difficulty of distributing the scriptures, i.e., cost. In contrast to the £40 Bible of Wyclif's day, we have seen a New Testament in paper covers for

one penny.[1] The British and Foreign Bible Society is simply built on the invention of printing. With this of course must be conjoined the discovery of paper. As Dr. Lindsay says: "The manufacture of paper, the discovery of the arts of printing and engraving . . . combined to make art and literature democratic."[2]

(*b*) A second event of tremendous importance occurred in 1453, though its bearing is not so immediately obvious. That event was the Fall of Constantinople to the assaults of the victorious Turks. This constituted the end of the Byzantine empire. But it had one curious repercussion. From Constantinople, like a hive of bees smoked out, fled the scholars westward, bringing to the moribund arts and letters of western Europe such a flood of revival as led eventually to both Renaissance and Reformation. At the moment of catastrophe the Fall of Constantinople could only be regarded as a crushing disaster to Christendom. Yet, well within a century, these twin-resurrections had occurred in the arts and religion.

For our own immediate purpose we note that on this westward tide came eminent scholars versed in the Greek and Hebrew languages.

[1] Dr. Paterson Smyth in closing this section of *How we got our Bible*, p. 82, gives one or two figures representing the costliness of a Bible, and the self-denial necessary to possess one. E.g., stipend of a parish priest £5 6*s*. 8*d*. p.a. Oxford fellowship £7 p.a.

[2] *History of the Reformation*, Vol. I, p. 45.

And, as has been said: "Greece rose from the grave with the New Testament in her hand." The first Greek grammar appeared in 1476, the first Hebrew grammar in 1503. There was a great disturbing of dust and antiquity in the hunt for Greek and Hebrew Biblical manuscripts amid a world which had been content hitherto to depend solely on the steadily polluted stream of the Latin Vulgate.

Then (*c*), the clear offspring of (*a*) and (*b*), *The Greek Testament of Erasmus*. This was the firstfruits of the new learning as applied to the Bible, and acquired its wide sphere of influence through the printing-press. This book, in turn, was to prove the veritable inspiration of Tyndale.

Erasmus definitely takes his place with Colet, Linacre, Grocyn and More as one of the group that made Oxford the centre of the Renaissance in England. He was neither a pedant nor a mere theologian. Yet he is an extraordinarily difficult man to sum up.

Sir Thomas Browne,[1] writing a century later, says of him: "Bigots are so oversway'd by a preposterous zeal that they hate all moderation in discourse of Religion . . . Erasmus . . . makes a great complaint to Sir Tho. More in an Epistle of his, touching one Dorpius a Divine

[1] Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, p. xv. Sir Thomas is one of the most quaintly erudite people within my knowledge. His books are a perfect revelation of amassed information which he wields with a certain humble yet most incisive effect.

of Lovain who because, upon occasion of Discourse between them, Erasmus would not promise to write against Luther, told Erasmus that he was a Lutheran, and afterwards published him for such; and yet as Erasmus was reputed no very good Catholic, so for certain he was no Protestant."

My knowledge of Erasmus certainly chimes with this. Erasmus was for ever seeking—to be let alone. And privacy was just what people would not grant him. He has been called "a man by himself." And because, in another sense, that was about all he asked to be, he has been termed "a great scholar but a petty-minded man."

He certainly disliked committing himself. When pressed he "hedged" and gave an ambiguous answer that he could interpret later as might be advisable. He was no man to take sides, no man to give his life for a cause, probably because no cause ever captured his enthusiasm in that way; nor had he any use for a Kingdom that had to be won by physical fighting.

He was liable to see both sides of a question, and was therefore despised by both sets of partisans. Yet he did not lack courage, nor did he always play for safety as his enemies aver. He just hated din, fuss and racket, and could not tolerate the people who would have "worked him up" to fever for this or that cause. He had his own idea of a reformation and it did not

tally either with Luther's ideas or with those of the Counter-reformation. When Adrian VI offered him a Cardinal's hat to oppose Lutherism at Rome he refused it. For him Christianity meant love and reverence, humility and purity; and his only intense ambition was to put into the hands of his generation the lives of Jesus and the letters of Paul in their original language. Luther and he went different ways. As Dr. Lindsay excellently says[1]: "Had Luther been gifted with that keen sense of prevision with which Erasmus was so fatally endowed, would he have stood forward to attack Indulgences in the way he did?"

Erasmus relied on common sense, ridicule, sarcasm—and time. Every line of Holbein's frequent portraits represents what has been called his "demure sarcasm." As Dr. Lindsay says: "The dainty hands . . . and the general primness of his appearance suggest a descent from a long line of maiden aunts."[2]

Another great artist, Albrecht Dürer, with eyes apparently less opened to signals of character than to physical features, cried to Erasmus to do more than he ever could. "Oh, Erasmus of Rotterdam, where art thou?—Hear, thou knight of Christ! Ride forth by the side of the Lord Christ; defend the truth, gain the martyr's crown! As it is, thou art but an old man."

[1] *Reformation in Germany*, Vol. I, p 176.
[2] Ibid., p. 177.

Yes—no knight or paladin of the lance, this! and true, an old man! The Reformation needed Luther as its knight-errant. But the Bible needed this "old man." And the old man did his task, the task he knew he could do. It was not perfect because the available manuscripts[1] were poor and faulty. And, *because* he did his task, Tyndale was able to do *his*, one man, as always, lending his shoulders for another's feet to stand upon.

[1] It is of interest to note that of the five Greek manuscripts he had before him none is earlier than the tenth century, and the one on which he most relied was of about the fifteenth century.

IV

TYNDALE

Tyndale was not a Wyclif. He had neither love nor aptness for political and ecclesiastical statesmanship. He was a student of Greek who had embraced Lutheran views, and ultimately, as might be gathered from his translations, was deeply influenced by Zwingli. The Bible was his single passion, hope of translating it a flame of fire within him. And Erasmus had lighted the pile. So that, when the whole sky was ablaze, Tyndale was content that it should burn even him also. He was of an heroic temper, yet almost timid and shrinking by nature, one is inclined to think. He was forever being chased hither and thither with his precious manuscripts and sheets; always running somewhither for safety, fully anticipating martyrdom by fire soon or later. In his condemned cell he showed the pathetic suffering and marvellous courage of the sensitive man. Could he have a warmer cap, he suffered so from catarrh! How unspeakably pathetic, this prematurely old little man of fifty-three,

waiting to be taken out and burnt, suffering from catarrh, and a little distressed about it! Could he have a warmer coat from his belongings, and some stuff to patch his leggings? and his shirts were worn out! And could he have his Hebrew Bible and Grammar and Dictionary?

I confess I never knew a more appealing courage than this. His one enthusiasm had burned the life out of him ere ever they tortured and burned that brave little body at the stake.

Long ago he had said, when they burned his Bibles, "If they burn me also they shall do none other thing than I look for." And they did it on Friday, October 6, 1536, whilst there lingered a last prayer on his lips that calls to mind both the first Christian martyr and his Christ. Tyndale's prayer was: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

A more selfless toiler for his Master there never was. His search for safety was all for the sake of his Book. He was always willing to be submerged out of sight, if they would give fairway to the Book. He offered to go away into perpetual exile if his person were the obstacle to the acceptance of the Book. His character and devotion are amply illustrated by an excerpt from Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, in the course of which Tyndale is quoted: "I am content that you bring me where you will into any country within England, giving me ten pounds a year

to live with, so you bind me to nothing but to teach children and to preach."

In his day it was necessary for a poor student to have a patron. Therefore, with the Great Idea blazing in his brain and heart, rejected by the Bishop of London, he found at length kind-hearted Humphrey Monmouth, a merchant living by the Tower, who took him in and cared for him.

But the Bishops looked askance at his work, and without them no publisher dared touch it. "Wherefore I perceived that not only in my Lord of London's palace but in all England there was no room for attempting a translation of the scriptures."

From Oxford to Cambridge, as though to catch the aura of his beloved Erasmus. From Cambridge to London for the Bishop's favour, but the Bishop would neither house him nor help him. From London to Hamburg in 1524, determined to work England's salvation from Germany, making light of the exile. Then, in 1525, at Cologne, with the sheets now in the printer's hands. But the printer's men talked in their cups, and a priest, Cochlaeus, heard of it. By judicious plying with wine he heard the rest and descended with a *posse* upon the place. Tyndale had just warning enough to snatch a bunch of sheets from the press before taking to flight. At Worms he won his battle, and the work was finished. Dr. Paterson Smyth[1] tells

[1] *How we got our Bible*, p. 89.

the story eloquently: "Knowing of the information that Cochlaeus had given, and that in consequence the books would be jealously watched, he printed also an edition in smaller size, as more likely to escape detection, and at once made provision for the forwarding of his dangerous merchandise to England. In cases, in barrels, in bales of cloth, in sacks of flour, every secret way that could be devised, the books were sent, and in spite of the utmost vigilance in watching the ports, many of them arrived, and in a few years the books were scattered far and wide through the country."

Surely was never a more romantic fight of one man against a hierarchy. Amazing, too, to find cultured and broad-minded Sir Thomas More in the battle against him! But in fairness we have to remember that the Roman Church—of which the English Church was still an integral part—had always proclaimed that the Church was the interpreter of the Bible, and that uncharted dangers of an appalling kind lay in the course of an untaught laity, should it seek to set the course of salvation from a Book alone and without the ecclesiastical Pilot. And More, among other able and good men in the Church of his day, was deeply conscious of the dangers of a free Bible.[1]

[1] A sidelight upon More may be gained from his attitude to the Wyclif Bible. As Dr. Workman says (Vol. II, p. 185), "Sir Thomas More, and, in our own day, Cardinal Gasquet, took it for granted that any Bible translated by Lollards would be a

Macaulay has an illustration in his Essay on Milton about the prisoner brought from his dark dungeon, and blind at first from excess of light. The cure, said Macaulay, is not to put him back, but to let him grow accustomed to the light. Nearly all new-found liberty leads for a time, and in some direction, to licence, and, though one may appreciate the point of view of the Bishops, it is now, of course, impossible to endorse it. The Reformation, when it burst into full light—Luther had long since nailed his theses to the church door[1] and burned the papal bull when Tyndale died—was to witness grave excesses that must have caused doubts and sombre fears in the minds of loyal Christians. Luther himself grievously lost his head in the terrible peasant episode. No Protestant, however, is going to regret or condemn the whole Reformation on that account.

Meantime, Tyndale's Bibles were being burned in great numbers at St. Paul's Cross, "a burnt-offering most pleasing to Almighty God," gravely writes Cardinal Campeggio to Wolsey. In the midst of it all ensued a perfect little comedy.

Augustine Pakington, a merchant trading with Antwerp, proposed to the Bishop of London

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partisan Bible, 'purposely corrupted' (to use More's phrases) so as to 'serve to the proof of such heresies as he went about to sow' . . . The result" (i.e., of Wyclif's labours) "was a Bible whose 'orthodoxy' misled More and Cardinal Gasquet into the denial that it could have come from the pen of Wyclif." Tyndale would come under like suspicion as a notorious Zwinglian.

[1] 1517.

that he should buy the Bibles for him at their continental source. "'Gentle Master Pakington,' said the Bishop, deemying that he hadde God by the toe, whanne in truthe he hadde, as after he thought, the devyl by the fiste,[1] 'do your diligence and get them for me and I will gladly give you whatever they may cost, for the books are naughty, and I intend surely to destroy them all, and to burn them at Paul's Cross.'"

Just such an *auto-da-fé* had Wolsey made of Luther's writings in 1521 on the same spot, and it had effectively stopped their importation.

"Master Tyndale, I have found you a good purchaser for your books!" Tyndale at first evinced surprise, then, when he understood, opposition, for his sensitive nature revolted against the suggestion of betrayal lurking beneath the pert smartness of the transaction.

Pakington then pointed out that Tyndale would have money to print ever so many more, and that the books would be burned in any case. Better to be paid for them! So, in the end, the Bishop had the books, Pakington had the thanks, and Tyndale had the money. When More was trying a heretic named Constantine some while later, he asked how Tyndale came by his funds, and the prisoner slyly informed him of the Bishop of London's munificence.

It was by now evident that the printing machine

[1] Halle's *Chronicle.*

had won the day in alliance with Tyndale's unconquerable purpose.

He was betrayed at the last by a clergyman, one Phillips, to whom he had shown great kindness, although forewarned of his treacherous character. He was trapped, seized and hurried to the castle of Vilvorden, where he was incarcerated in a dungeon, to suffer soon afterwards a martyr's death at the stake.

Tyndale's work still lives: for the Authorised Version is often nothing but Tyndale, and the Revised Version still retains much unaltered. He is the first translator to go back to the original Hebrew. For the New Testament he used, of course, Erasmus, and used, as well, Erasmus's Latin translation of the New Testament. Some think, too, that he had Luther's German Bible before him. It was the New Testament that, rightly, commanded his enthusiasm. Of the Old Testament he had published only the Pentateuch and the book of Jonah when he died, but his translation of the historical books from Joshua to Chronicles was issued posthumously.

V

TYNDALE RECENSIONS

No other title can so well be applied to the Bibles which followed, for they were almost entirely unconfessed adaptations or revisions of Tyndale's work.

Tyndale's dying prayer was soon to be answered.

In 1534, in Convocation of the Church of England, a petition was carried for an English translation of the Scriptures. Meantime Myles Coverdale (later, Bishop of Exeter) had completed his translation,[1] which appeared in 1535.[2] He was a humble man, possessing neither the scholarship nor the ability of Tyndale, and admits that he did the work from a sense of duty rather than disposition thereto, making frank mention of translators who had helped him under the

[1] It has been known as the Treacle Bible from the rendering "Is there no Triacle (i.e., balm) in Gilead?" (Jer. viii. 22), and has other queer phrases like "Brake his brain-panne" (Judges ix. 53).

[2] Wakeman (*History of the Church of England*), puts it in 1536 and adds that it was allowed by the King of England to be circulated though not directly authorised (p. 258).

HOLBEIN'S FRONTISPIECE TO THE GREAT BIBLE

[*Face page* 85.

title of "five interpreters." Manifestly Tyndale was the chief of these, as Coverdale's New Testament follows that of Tyndale very closely. Moreover he made no claim to original translation. It was "translated from Douche and Latin into English."

Royal authorisation was reserved for the Great Bible of 1538 or 1539, which was really a combination of Tyndale and Coverdale. This is the only edition of the scriptures carrying such authorisation before 1611. That the Church as such did not authorise it was due, as Dr. Wakeman says, to obstructions set in their way by the King himself. Henry VIII was always the egoist; and, if limelight were to be focussed, there could be no question as to the point for the spotlight.

This Bible went into every parish church. In the introductory design by Holbein, the Almighty is seen with two scrolls issuing from His mouth. One announces, "The word which goeth forth from me shall not return to me empty, but shall accomplish whatsoever I will have done." The other is directed at Henry, who stands bareheaded to receive it, his crown at his feet. "I have found me a man after mine own heart, who shall fulfil all my will." Henry in turn answers, "Thy word is a lantern unto my feet." It is not possible to detect whether the artist has put the royal tongue in the cheek.

Below, the King is to be seen again, handing the work to Cranmer and Cromwell with the

command, "Take this and teach." From them, lower down, it reaches the parish priests, and thence the commonalty, who virtually reflect the great glory of King Henry in this matter by an uncountable flotilla of labels, *Vivat Rex*, that emerge from this many-mouthed crowd.

Meantime both "Matthew" (John Rogers) and Taverner had issued what were virtually pirate editions of Tyndale. These are of no importance, and only of political interest. The Great Bible, which was made under Coverdale's direction, was a recension of his own and Matthew's, which means just Tyndale, and therefore, three years after the man was martyred for doing it, his Bible was taken under the royal wing and re-issued with every mark of smug complacency and beneficence. Tyndale, however, would feel that his prayer was answered so long as England got his Bible under any name. The King of England's eyes were opened at least to the fact that there was glory waiting to be annexed, his for the mere appropriation. God's will is done in a variety of ways and through an amazing hotch-potch of human motives. The wise, like Tyndale, are just content that it should be done.

And Tyndale still spoke in the *Geneva Bible*,[1] 1560, for it was more truly a careful revision of his work than a fresh translation. It enjoyed 140 editions in 84 years, and was the work of

[1] Known as the Breeches Bible for its translation of Gen. iii. 7: Adam and Eve "sewed fig-tree leaves together and made themselves breeches."

Whittingham, Gilby and Sampson. A New Testament was issued from Geneva by Whittingham alone as early as 1557[1] with an introduction by Calvin. The Geneva Bible had naturally a strong Calvinistic and anti-ecclesiastical bias in its marginal notes. This Bible was the first to adopt modern Roman type instead of the old black-letter, the first to divide the text into verses, and the first to omit the Apocrypha. It was also the first to write in italics words not justified by the original text but requisite in a translation.

The Bishops put out a competitive version eight years later which maintained itself up to 1611 largely by ecclesiastical authority. The Great Bible too, was still alive, to be found chained in country churches; but the Genevan, the notes of which had a Puritan tendency, was the people's favourite. There was manifestly room for a national version. Yet the proposal to that effect, coming from Dr. Reynolds, was received with terse disfavour by Archbishop Bancroft, who was probably prejudiced owing to the Puritan source whence the proposal emanated. The suggestion, however, found favour

[1] This date made it seem possible that this might have been the Bible presented to Elizabeth in London in 1559 (see p. 11); others have conjectured the Great Bible. The truth is plain, however, for the *actual book* is now in the Rylands Library. In the words of the Librarian, Dr. Guppy, it contains "the Four Gospels in the later form of the Wyclifite translation into English, with prologues, on vellum, about A.D. 1410," and was "presented by Francis Newport, who, for the sake of his religion, had been compelled to fly from the country during the reign of Queen Mary. There is prefixed to it a long letter written by Newport to the Queen."

in the eyes of a bookish patron, who happened to be all but omnipotent in the matter—James I, a man who, like his royal predecessor, but less grossly, felt that the glory of his reign would be materially increased by such an achievement under his presidency. Naturally, too, his Church views were such as to make him dislike the Genevan Bible, and he gives no uncertain direction that the new version shall contain no marginal notes! those in the Genevan being "very partial, untrue, seditious, and savouring too much of dangerous and treacherous conceits."

All ecclesiastical opposition was smoothed by the arrangement that the Bishops' Bible should be the basis of the new work, to be departed from only when accuracy demanded. Differences of opinion were settled at the mass meetings of the fifty-four revisers; and general rules were drawn up for their guidance, the only marginal notes finally allowed being explanations of difficult Hebrew or Greek words. The scholars worked in six committees on Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, European Bibles and commentaries, and carefully expressed their results in sound idiomatic English.[1]

Dr. Paterson Smyth quotes two excellent commendations from Roman Catholic sources which must be reproduced here. Dr. Geddes

[1] An excellent parallel of a passage from eight different versions ranging from Wyclif and Purvey, including Douay and Rheims versions on to our A.V. is to be seen in Dr. Moulton's English Bible, pp. 202–205.

(1786) declares that "if accuracy and strictest attention to the letter of the text be supposed to constitute an excellent version, this is of all versions the most excellent."

Father Faber writes: "Who will say that the uncommon beauty and marvellous English of the Protestant Bible is not one of the great strongholds of heresy in this country . . . ? There is not a Protestant with one spark of religiousness about him whose spiritual biography is not in the Anglo-Saxon Bible."

VI

THE REVISED VERSION

For nearly three hundred years the Authorised Version held a sway that was to be questioned only during the last decade or two of that period. But the need for yet another revision is plain enough if we care to ponder the situation.

(*a*) Take the case of manuscripts first, and narrow the question down to a consideration not only of the New Testament but of the heart of it, i.e., the gospels. Consider the uncials which bear the brunt of the battle. Six uncials contain the whole of the gospels, four nearly the whole, ten or eleven a great part, others a small portion. For our purpose, then, twenty uncials constitute the chief evidence. Bear in mind, further, the fact that the earlier the text of an uncial the greater its weight. Note the change in the uncial position, then, since 1611.

The Vatican Codex has become accessible, containing the whole of the gospels. There is the romantic discovery by Dr. Tischendorf of the Sinaitic Codex with its complete New

Testament. Since 1628 the Alexandrian Codex has been lying with eloquent patience in England's custody, with Mark, Luke and practically all of John complete. Chemical treatment in 1834 has brought Codex Ephraemi up from the shadows into legibility, with valuable portions of the gospels. And these four new discoveries comprise the *earliest* of all the existing manuscripts. Even with the Hebrew text there has been Ussher's eager acquisition of Samaritan Bibles in 1630.

(*b*) Add to these striking facts the immense growth, particularly in the nineteenth century, of Greek and Hebrew scholarship, the multitude of archæological discoveries and the increased skill in deciphering them.

(*c*) Couple, again, with these factors the rise of a virtually new science, textual criticism, i.e., the capacity to compare, weigh and assess the values of schools of text and individual manuscripts.[1]

(*d*) Attempt to estimate the shift in meanings of words from Shakespeare's day to Queen

[1] This is sometimes known as *Lower Criticism*. In distinction from it the next stage is known as *Higher Criticism*, this branch having to do with dates, authors and details of composition or compilation. Further, *Historical Criticism* deals with the history contained in the books, assessing its value and correctness. The religious ideas and doctrines are separately treated, yet again, under the title of *Biblical Theology*. All these branches are covered by the general heading of *Biblical Criticism*.

Victoria's. Read a fascinating book like Bradley's *Making of English* or, as particularly apt, Wright's *Bible Word Book*. Take a few simple illustrations to indicate the width of shift in meanings.

"Nice" used to mean "particular" or "sensitive" e.g., in the phrase "a nice distinction." Whilst it is still used with that significance in the scholastic world, to the general understanding it means just "pleasant."

Or take Bishop Tonstal's "naughty," applied to the Bibles he was burning. To us it is a playful word applicable to the wayward habits of children. Then it was of deep significance and equivalent to "wicked" or "bad." (cf. Jer. xxiv. 2 "naughty figs," i.e., rotten.)

Again, "damnation" then had its purely Latin significance of "condemnation." Now it has a vindictive and awful connotation which we have no business to associate with the utterances of Christ and His Apostles.

"Cunnynge" also, which Purvey uses for wholesome knowledge (see p. 69) has attracted to itself more sinister implications.

We were right then to take upon ourselves the burden of the charge delivered by Tyndale in his preface:

"If they (i.e., scholars) perceive in any place that the version has not attained unto the very sense of the tongue or the very meaning of Scripture, or have not given the right English word, that they should put to their hands and

amend it, remembering that so is their duty to do."

Nor should any consideration of the beauty of the Authorised Version as literature or as a historical monument rightly have dissuaded from their duty the inheritors of such a charge as Tyndale's. And it did not. They realised that the greatest and chief beauty of the Bible must ever lie in its truth.

And the Revisers made that their guide, when, with Bishop Ellicott as their chairman, and world-famous scholars like Westcott, Hort, Scrivener, Lightfoot, Trench, Moulton and the rest of that galaxy, they took their places at the table in the Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey. Picture before each man a sheet with a column of the Authorised Version printed in the middle, a space for Greek changes on the left, English renderings on the right.[1]

Biblical truth in its accuracy can never again be conceived as presenting itself spontaneously to a faith that is lazily uninformed. Never again, to anyone who knows the facts, can the approach to the God behind written truth be held to be incompatible with scholarship; nay, rather, must it be realised that without the earnest endeavour of disciplined and docile application we cannot hope to disinter the treasure. The trained mind

[1] For a very interesting detailed account of the tackling of a difficult passage I must refer my readers yet again to *How we got our Bible*, p. 140.

must conspire with the "kingly" enthusiasm to discover those elements of eternal verity which God has allowed to become concealed by passage and dust of years. For He verily means us to discover it, as is evidenced by the gifts and graces which none other than He has placed within us.

PART II

HOW DID THE BOOKS COME TO BE WRITTEN?

(*A*)

THE NEW TESTAMENT

I

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

The first essential fact to grasp is that Christianity did not start out into the world with a New Testament in its hand. Beyond the allusions to an expected Messiah, which wind like a thread of gold through Jewish scriptures, and clearly were used by early Christian apostles, there was no other hunting-ground for texts and proof passages. The apostles went out preaching the marvellous love of Christ (as shown more particularly in His death) and His power to save to the uttermost; the Resurrection demonstrating that power in His own case to be superior both to death and the sin of men. I am not concerned here to "prove" the Resurrection of Christ. It proves itself. We shall be reviewing shortly histories, by witnesses palpably reliable,

which show beyond quibble that something stupendous occurred to a handful of dispirited and listless disciples, cowed by the death of their Lord, to transform them into a lion-hearted band of missionaries. For these men, as Paley[1] tersely enough pointed out nearly a century and a half ago, had nothing whatever to gain by being slaughtered for a lie. Moreover, it would have been a silly lie. Also, although Johan Bojer once wrote a gripping novel to demonstrate *The Power of a Lie*, lies are always destructive in their power, not constructive. And a lie never built the great Christian Church which is, after all, the chief witness (in its unbroken continuity) to the fact that something tremendous must have happened thus to inspire and empower the apostles.

A mistake, possibly? a dream? an hallucination? But did ever a dream or hallucination visit a number of people who were not expecting it, at various times and places, and in broad daylight? That is much harder to believe than the resurrection. Also, it is so much more natural to believe that the beautiful cannot die than that it can.

Then there is Paul's marvellous turn-about to account for. All these apostles give the one simple explanation of why they set about throwing their lives away. There has never been an alternative explanation of the slightest convincing

[1] *Evidences of Christianity* (A.D. 1794).

power. From the beginning the enemies of Jesus *were afraid it was true*. Accordingly they bribed the soldiers to lie (Matt. xxviii. 11–15). *Not a particle of evidence to the contrary has ever transpired.*

There was, then, this company of men, inspired by the re-encountered Master, going out to tell the world that life was a glorious thing, if spent in the service and under the redeeming power of that Master. But they had no text-book. A few allusions, as we have noted—no more. Some, more legally-minded Jewish Christians, living mentally in the backwoods of time, were loth for a while to let slip the whole ceremonial of Mosaic Law, and were inclined to impose it on Gentile Christians.

But the Council of Jerusalem, and an encounter between Paul and Peter at Antioch about the same time (Gal. ii. 11–21), made clear for all time that the Old Testament was now indeed old, and that a new life of freedom in Christ had taken its place. The risk of licence, as we have said, must be taken. Some people will bluff and live a lie if the rigour of exacting laws are suddenly lifted. Hypocrites and humbugs there were then (Ananias and Sapphira for two) as we should expect. That left the principle unaffected. The message still held. There was mercy with the Saviour for the vilest outcast, as for the most self-righteous pietist, if the one were content to try to sin no more, the other to realise that the

first must be last, the would-be-greatest least. Self-sufficiency was at a discount now. No more the keeping of innumerable regulations, with the puffed-up pride that often followed, was to be esteemed as righteousness, but rather the child-heart, love for all the children of God, and the will to bear a cross to Golgotha for Christ's sake.

The urgency of the realisation that this message of the love of God for every man must reach the far corners of the then known world with all possible despatch sent these men, Paul in particular, hot-foot about their Master's business. Not merely the twelve, but the faithful remnants of the seventy, among whom Clement of Alexandria reckoned that Barnabas, Matthias and Barsabbas were included, took part in the campaign.[1] Their narrow Jewish provincialism began to fall from them. There was Peter dealing with the Gentile Cornelius in the sudden, flashing realisation that no man on earth was to be reckoned unclean in the sense of being outside God's salvation. There was Philip the Deacon in touch with the Ethiopian eunuch of Candace. But the master campaigner, the general and organiser of their new armageddon, was the cultured, intense Paul of Tarsus. He it was who speedily flung, by his own untiring efforts, a line of outposts through Asia Minor, planting

[1] Probably Andronicus, also, and Junias, whom Paul speaks of (Rom. xvi. 7) as having been "in Christ before me."

forts at Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, peg-claiming for Christ the highlands of Phrygia and Galatia, crossing boldly into Greece, setting standards in frothy, immoral Corinth, serious Philippi, hostile Thessalonica, responsive Ephesus, philosophic Athens, finally winning his culminating victory, and the death he counted cheap as the price, at Rome, that mistress of the world, where his strategic brain and burning enthusiasm had long yearned to secure his Master's coronation.

II

THE ORIGIN OF THE EPISTLES

(*a*) *Letters of Paul.* Following Paul alone, as the Acts in the end decides to do, we soon realise that to keep all these beacons of the cross glowing and bright was impossible if they were to be dependent solely upon his presence with them. Whilst he was at one place, he would hear disconcerting rumours of misunderstanding and disaffection at another of the cluster of his beloved Christian societies. For in this world even the message of the love of God cannot run a smooth road through the quags and crags of human passions. So you may picture Paul, in the brief intervals and respites between preaching tours and spiritual wrestlings that would have worn out almost anybody but a Paul of Tarsus or a John Wesley, dictating at almost white heat of affectionate solicitude, the words of rebuke, warning, help and inspiration that should cause these converts to reveal the image of that Master to Whom they had pledged allegiance.

Probably the first letter to be written was that to the *Galatians*, the cluster of churches founded on his First Journey, at whose close he wrote the letter. Galatia-with-Phrygia was a single province of the Roman Empire, and Paul's letter would doubtless circulate from Iconium to Lystra, Lystra to Derbe, and back to Antioch (Pisidia). There was argument concerning the faith and clear rulings on the question of Gentiles being saddled with Jewish laws. No one can be certain whether the great Council at Jerusalem (Acts xv) preceded or followed this, but it dealt with the same topics, and provided the same conclusion. The letter is not earlier than A.D. 46.

The next occasion that has left a record caught him at Corinth, on his Second Journey; where he learned that the *Thessalonians*, amongst whom, despite the fact that his stay was cut short by a hostile populace, he had planted a vigorous little nucleus of Christians, were in the throes of misunderstanding about his teaching on this, that and the other question, in particular the second manifestation of the now-invisible Master. He wrote this letter round about the year A.D. 50. He would doubtless have been astounded to learn that his letters would one day be included in a canon of scripture, scripture of even greater import than his Jewish scriptures. It would probably have cramped his style, had he known. As it is, we have just the warm, human document, not perfect, not infallible (even on the

subject of the Re-manifestation or Second Coming, concerning which he later seems to have modified his views), but there it is, warm and human, a record of his emotions towards this particular church; a far more precious document than it would have been if he had known he was orating to all the Christians that were or ever would be. It is important to realise as we study the emergence of letter after letter that the demand for these preceded the demand for gospels, or lives of Christ.

Now Paul did not make his point adequately clear in this letter to the Thessalonians, for a *second letter* had to be written next year dealing frankly with various hindrances in Christians to that expected "return" of the Lord Jesus. Considerable confusion of thought and excitement existed in the minds of the Thessalonians, as they dwelt on the nearness and thrill of that Coming on the clouds of heaven; so much so that there was a natural tendency not to concentrate on the duties of this life and on the essential task of building up Christian character. Now Paul at this time shared the belief in some such spectacular Coming. Therefore he does not reprove the idea so much as counsel moderation and balance. Gradually, however, Paul developed, as any other Christian should, in mind and soul. And so long as we do not attribute any unwarranted infallibility to the man or his writings, the development of his thought-life, as epistle

follows epistle, is both fascinating and helpful. In his later writings spectacular notions have faded out, and he betrays a growing tendency to picture Christ more spiritually as the indwelling presence in the Christian's heart. The necessities and graces of daily life take precedence in his teaching over the conjectural details of apocalypse. The dominant note becomes: "For me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21).

Paul was wont to write the final greeting of a letter in his own hand as a sign of authenticity (Apparently busybodies sometimes wrote to Paul's converts under *his* name! Cf. 2 Thess. ii. 2). It also stood as a token of affection. These greetings contrasted heavily with the neat work of the amanuensis, as, apparently, they were written in coarse, big characters: "See with how large letters I have written unto you" (Gal. vi. 11). Such a handwriting may be accounted for by the accepted theory that Paul suffered badly from eye trouble.

How intensely these letters would be treasured and guarded by the Thessalonian Christians, and publicly read in assemblies, may be gauged if we remember that they were all that the converts possessed by which to confirm and follow up the preaching Paul and Silas had uttered during that short visit in the course of the Second Missionary Journey.

Then, in A.D. 52, Paul set out on his Third Missionary Journey, the major portion of whose

duration was spent at Ephesus (over two years). It was probably from there, between A.D. 52–54 that he wrote his *letters to the Corinthians*. Corinth was a hot-bed of undesirable elements, and attracted, as the Sargasso Sea hoards fouling weed, the human scum of the Eastern Mediterranean sea-board. Jealousies abounded here and consolidated themselves into factions. The groups took various preachers as leaders, as athletic clubs choose colours, and backed them against all comers. Paul has to convince them in his writings that he himself, Cephas (i.e., Peter), Apollos and the rest are but ministers, and fallible ones at that, whilst Christ, the all in all, is the only leader. In his letter to the Galatians Paul had dealt with argumentative matters such as the relation between faith, works and justification. Evidently the Galatians were disputatious people with a liking for strong mental food. This great subject of justification Paul now elaborated at greater length in the letter to the Roman Christians which he appears to have despatched from Corinth. He seems to have spent a few months there on this Third Journey. He entrusted it to Phœbe, a convert who was sailing to Rome from Cenchreæ, the port of Corinth.[1] We must realise that he was writing to a Christian community which he had never seen yet. Therefore the letter lacks the

[1] Rom. xvi, 1, 2. This assumes, of course, that Rom. xvi is an integral part of that Epistle.

note of personal contact, and we are not surprised that it runs on general lines of a massive and majestic statement of the Christian faith as he saw it at that time, in a fashion which might commend it to the most legal-minded nation the world has known. In both the letter to the Galatians and in the *letter to the Romans* we get the great setting forth of Paul's idea of the relation of Christianity to Judaism. We can never be sufficiently thankful for Paul's broad strategic mind on this subject.

As all roads led not only to Rome, but from it, he would have met many Roman Christians from time to time, and these possibly inspired him to write the letter, and added fuel to his master-ambition to preach Christ in Rome. (See the long list of greetings with which the letter closes.)

After bearing a collection of money from the provinces to distressed saints in Jerusalem, he was arrested there in a street fracas engineered by his enemies, the supporters of his old faith. From now onwards he ceases to be a free agent.

About the spring of A.D. 59, after dilatory detentions under Felix and Festus, with Agrippa in the background, he was sent to Rome under escort, the irony of this being that a claim of his own, i.e., to be tried by Cæsar (his right as a Roman citizen) barred his being set at liberty by Agrippa. For, this act of transparent justice that easy-going kinglet was apparently prepared

to execute. But, "He has appealed unto Cæsar: to Cæsar he must go."

I wonder if Paul would have had it otherwise, or if he accepted the irony of circumstances as the finger of God. He was going to Rome, after all, though he went in chains. After an adventurous voyage, including exposure and shipwreck, he reached Rome, and, for a time, dwelt in his own lodgings, a prisoner as it were on parole. From here were written about A.D. 60 those most spiritual and inspiring of all his letters, each addressed to a Christian community, the *Colossians*,[1] *Philippians*[2] and *Ephesians*.[3] Also at this time, probably, the gentle and beautiful

[1] The apostle is here fighting false notions concerning the intermediacy of strange spirits and angels as well as the vice of spiritual pride and exclusiveness. Hence the note that Christ is the *only* mediator, and the mediator for *all* men.

[2] This is a letter whose writing must have given great joy to the apostle. He had practically no vices or backsliding to correct, but is able to paint a beautiful picture of the deeper aspects of the Christian life.

[3] It should be stated here that there is grave doubt whether the traditional address of this last letter is accurate. The best MSS. omit the words "At Ephesus" in the opening verse, leaving a blank, and it is almost impossible to conceive that Paul, after spending nearly three years there, could, in his senses, write the words in i. 15, iii. 2, iv. 21. Some self-opinionated copyist must have filled in the gap in verse 1, and filled it in as clumsily as possible! Probably the letter was meant for circulation to a group of churches round about and possibly including Ephesus, and the name of each was to be filled in as required; e.g., Laodicea (which Tertullian suggests was the goal of the Epistle). This would account for the rather striking absence of personal greetings. The 'Ephesians' were down-hearted over his imprisonment and this letter makes for spiritual encouragement, its subject the glorious experience of the full life 'in Christ." Coleridge describes it as "one of the divinest compositions of man."

little letter to Christian *Philemon*,[1] pleading for restraint and forgiveness in the matter of a certain runaway slave, Onesimus.

After two years he seems to have been released from even this shadowy imprisonment, and to have had a little Indian summer of preaching, an afterglow of the life he had revelled in at the high noon of his career. He may have gone as far east as Macedonia and Asia (Phil. ii. 24; Philem. 22), surely Asia Minor (1 Tim. i. 3, 2 Tim. iv. 13–20), and perhaps even as far west as Spain (Rom. xv. 24). To this period is attributed his *first letter to Timothy*, a boy he won on his first missionary journey at Lystra; also the little *letter to Titus*.[2]

He was re-arrested and apparently executed by the Emperor's order, though we have no details in the Acts. Therefore the date is doubtful, though Christian tradition seems assured concerning the fact. It may have been as late as A.D. 68, but was very likely two or three years earlier. Just before his death he wrote[3] his *second letter to Timothy*, thus leaving us, in all, with thirteen surviving epistles. These letters

[1] Some place this at Rome, written when Paul was himself a prisoner. Oddly enough the safest place for a runaway was Rome, as is London for a modern criminal. Renan describes it as "a true little *chef d'œuvre* of the art of letter writing."

[2] H. Bisseker (Peake's *Commentary*, p. 881) suggests Macedonia in A.D. 66 as possible. We must observe that there is strong critical opinion against the letters being genuine, at any rate in their present form. Possibly they were written up by some disciple on the basis of fragmentary letters in Paul's hand.

[3] See last sentences of Note 2.

were doubtless copied and exchanged between the Churches, as Paul foreshadows was his will concerning them (Col. iv. 16).

This survey has, perhaps without your realising it, given you a summary of the *Acts of the Apostles*, which was unquestionably by Luke, the doctor, an almost constant companion of Paul's from the middle of the Second Missionary Journey up to his death in Rome. ("Only Luke is with me," is one of Paul's words from Rome.)

It is now quite certain that Paul did *not* write the *letter to the Hebrews* (dating somewhere between A.D. 65-85), but it is impossible to say who did. It will be realised, of course, that neither gospels nor letters carried the author's signature, nor even his name under a title. The clue comes only from the body of the text, or from external evidence. The author was surely a Jew, possibly of Alexandria, probably a friend of Timothy's. The epistle is a great spiritualising of the Hebrew ideas of sacrifice and priesthood to suit the work and person of Christ. It is beautifully written. Apollos and Barnabas have both been suggested as possible authors.

(*b*) *Other Letters.* Finally, in addition to the letter to the Hebrews, there are just seven letters by other hands than Paul's.

That of *James* (most probably James, brother of our Lord, and a leading Christian at Jerusalem) is of a character more similar, in its simplicity

and direct application of Christianity to daily life, to the teaching of our Lord Himself than is any other epistle. It has no theological doctrine to outline, no word of justification or the scheme of salvation, even seeming at times to clash with these doctrines. Luther denounced it as "an epistle of straw." If an epistle of straw, then we must at least note that it is that of a kind of "straw" that goes to fashion strong bricks of character. It was addressed to the Twelve Tribes that are of the Dispersion (i.e., Jews in foreign parts like Asia Minor and Alexandria).

Similar, in the main, is the *first letter of Peter*, a letter of strenuous morality, addressed to the same people. It sounds like Peter, impetuous, enthusiastic and outright. The *second letter* bearing his name is just as clearly *not* Peter's. Origen, the first Father to mention it, does so only to state that its genuineness is disputed; Eusebius, Erasmus and also Calvin agree with him. If it is not genuine, some might term it a literary fraud, for it claims to be his work and refers to the former epistle. Even, however, if Peter's name *is* "borrowed," we must not assume that the book is of no value, any more than we lose all interest in the stanzas of the Rowley Romance by a certain "Thomas Rowlie" (contemporary of Lydgate) when we find that the "Thomas Rowlie" is none other than Thomas Chatterton himself (1752–1770). As Thomas Seccombe

says: "In the case of these particular forgeries the quality of the poetry is to be admired."[1]

So with 2 Peter, there may well be, and definitely is, value in the work. And, as for the motive, well, what in Chatterton is literary mischief may well have been in this unknown writer a desperate desire to enunciate a message that burned within him, and, by a stratagem, to make sure of its gaining a hearing. It may date as late as A.D. 150. In that case the author would need to represent his work as an archæological "find," as Chatterton did.

Of the three *letters of John* anyone must be extreme to doubt the genuineness of the first, vouched for as it is by Polycarp, John's own disciple. The other two are less surely established, but firmly enough to make John a more likely author than anyone else that can be named. They are of beautiful spiritual quality, written from Ephesus towards the close of the first century, and seem obviously of the same temper and inspiration as the work of the writer of John's gospel. The first is more general, the second and third more personal, being letters redolent of an exquisite ideal of friendship.

The little *letter of Jude*, not unlike 2 Peter in tenor, does not help us to its authorship by defining Jude as "brother of James"! Question concerning it arose as early as Origen, whose doubts were echoed by Eusebius, aud we may well wonder whether it is of apostolic authorship at all.

[1] *Age of Johnson*, p. 276.

III

APOCALYPSE

This completes the brief survey of the twenty-one epistles and of the Acts, a history indispensable for the understanding of the epistles. Before we proceed to the historical books, however, there remains that most mysterious writing, the final conundrum of the New Testament, a book which the reformer Zwingli simply and bluntly rejected from the Canon. The book reveals how the Jewish mind was obsessed, even into Christian days, by the inexplicable fascination that lurks in tortuous and involved presentment of either history or utopian dream. The gospels are not free from it. Mark, Matthew and Luke all attribute to Christ a section in this apocalyptic or riddling vein.[1] But the "Apocalypse of St. John the Divine" (i.e., *Book of Revelation*) carries the type of writing to its zenith in a fashion that would need an Ezekiel to interpret. (Archdeacon Charles is possibly that modern Ezekiel). It

[1] Mark xiii, Matthew xxiv, Luke xxi.

has been the happy hunting ground of all jig-saw-minded people, who have professed again and again from it to derive both the history of the current generation and the signs and dates of the end of the world. The Great Beast whose number is 666 has been identified with every tyrant from Nero to Napoleon, and even with the ex-Kaiser of Germany. Probably the nearest we can get to the truth amid this flamboyant intricacy is that it was a picture of the times in which it was written, done in a style equivalent to that of the cubist and futurist pictorial artists of our day. As Dr. Harnack well says: "Every time the political situation culminated in a crisis for the people of God the apocalypses appeared stirring up the believers. . . . They all spoke in riddles; that is, by means of riddles, symbols, mystic numbers, forms of animals, etc., they half concealed what they meant to reveal. The reasons for this procedure are not far to seek: (1) Clearness and distinctness would have been too profane; (2) It was often dangerous to be too distinct."

By this we explain, for instance, Ezekiel, (writing under the shadow of the smashed monarchy of Judah); the work of "Daniel" (written under the frightful stress of Syrian barbarity, about 168); and also the chapters in the gospels (influenced by the Fall of Jerusalem). This queer book of Revelation, in its original

form, most probably dates from the time of Nero's persecution.[1]

If the number 666 has any value it most assuredly corresponds to Kaiser Neron, whose Hebrew consonants (which do service also as numerals) can stand for 666.[2] There is a considerable backing for the belief that it was written by John, the beloved disciple. The only hesitation that one has in accepting this lies in the difficulty of believing that the Gospel of John, so markedly different, can have come from the same pen. Apart from a few flashes of superlative beauty in the Apocalypse which parallel the fourth gospel, there is scarcely a basis of comparison for the two books. The Apocrypha of both Testaments include many more such books, which space forbids us to discuss. We must remember, however, that, whilst it may be largely meaningless for us who are neither orientals nor the victims of fierce persecution, it probably brought untold comfort to the Jews of that time. Gessius Florus, procurator of Judæa, had exhausted even his malignant ingenuity in exasperating the Jews; and when the revolt broke out in A.D. 66 no one should have been less surprised than he. It was put down with almost unexampled fury and ferocity, for the Jewish zealots had themselves used no half-

[1] Perhaps with additions from the era of Domitian, but the bulk of the book may quite possibly be dated between 68-70.

[2] A detailed summary of probable solutions to these riddles may be found in Gladden's *Who Wrote the Bible?*

measures in their outbreak against tyranny. When Vespasian and his son, Titus, were placed in charge of the imperial troops, the watchword apparently was, *No Quarter*. Starting from Antioch in March, 67, they relentlessly swept Palestine,the Jews fighting every inch like tigers. Back and back and back, blood and black destruction everywhere, till the remnants were driven into Jerusalem and the city beset.

Then came the Apocalypse of John (written, it claims, on Patmos in the Ægean) written for the comforting and steadying of such as were marked to die, or feared they were. Therefore we make no belittlement of the work, merely stating that, for the most part, it had a great significance for its time, but that for us it is, in the main, but an interesting historical relic. Erasmus with his usual sharp aptness said, in refusing to believe the book to be inspired, that though it may be a very blessed thing to believe what is in it, nobody is able to tell what that is.[1]

[1] Which is, nevertheless, a good reason perhaps for *not* being hasty in *denying* its inspiration.

IV

GOSPELS

I WANT us at this point, after noting these vicissitudes of Christian life in the newly established communities, as recorded in the Acts and hinted in the Epistles, to realise that the Christian church was still without an *authoritative* written gospel, i.e., any official account of the life of Jesus Christ with the collected teaching involved in such an account. Many strove to meet the need (cf. Luke i. 1).

(*a*) *Mark*. The first surviving gospel, Mark's, cannot well be dated, at earliest, more than a year or so before A.D. 70, the year of the fall of Jerusalem, and may be a shade later.

Now, when saints were falling right and left in massacre, or by execution, and when the preachers and people who had known the great facts of Christ's life, and many of whom had heard His words, were dying and their generation fading out, it became a manifest necessity to supplement this dwindling testimony, for the sake not only of the rising generation but of those to follow still later. And it was probably at Rome

that John Mark, member of the Christian community of Jerusalem, possibly the young man of Mark xiv. 51, certainly companion of Paul in his First Missionary Journey, wrote down, virtually at the dictation of Simon Peter, the first evangel (or gospel) of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is now largely agreed, as has been said, that Mark must be placed earlier than A.D. 70. Justin Martyr (about 130-140) speaks of "the apostles in the records which they made, called Gospels." The word "apostles" is sufficient to indicate severe limits of date. Mark took his gospel at dictation from Peter; Matthew wrote the book that gives distinction to the gospel named after him; Luke was the companion of Paul; and, so far, John, son of Zebedee, has not been ousted from responsibility for the fourth gospel. "Apostles," therefore, is a phrase that may stand. And Justin is a man to rely upon; for, from his quotations alone, the main story of the gospels could be reconstructed.

Now, Mark's is a brief, rugged gospel of narrative and fact. The need for a history of the chief incidents of Our Lord's Life, culminating in His death and resurrection, was the crying need of the hour. His teaching was reflected in the epistles, and in the preaching of the apostles. It now needed the supplement of the incidents of His life. Not the mystic details of Incarnation, nothing but the bare fact. Not philosophic meandering of speculation about

this and that landmark in His life, but the landmarks themselves. Not theories of Atonement, analyses of the Empty Tomb, philosophies of Justification, but simply the life of Christ, the grown man; not even His childhood, but the big facts of His ministry and death. These, and in the main only these, was Peter able to supply. The whole narrative is like the man. Nor can we be sufficiently thankful that this was so in our earliest gospel. Given the facts, we are placed in great measure where the Apostles stood, and we can draw our own inferences and make our own deductions as well as they could; even in some sense better, for distance clarifies the perception. The familiar testimony of Papias (*c.* 130–140) must not be omitted here. "Mark having become Peter's interpreter wrote down all he remembered—not, however, in order—both the words and the deeds of Christ. For he never heard the Lord, nor attached himself to Him, but later on, as I said, attached himself to Peter, who used to adapt his lessons to the needs of the occasion, but not as though he was composing a connected treatise of the discourses of our Lord; so that Mark committed no error in writing down some matters just as he remembered them. For one object was in his thoughts, to make no omissions and no false statements of any kind." (Dr. Edwin Abbott's rendering.)

This Greek narrative is possibly the nearest we shall ever get to Christ's words. But we

must still remember that though Peter would give Mark the Aramaic[1] in which our Lord spoke, Mark, the interpreter, had to translate it into Greek. Just occasionally he gives us the original wording as well, e.g., *Ephphatha*, i.e., Be opened (vii. 34), *Talitha Cumi*, i.e., Little girl, get up (v. 41), and, most poignant of all, *Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani* (on the Cross). It should be mentioned that a great scholar (Dr. J. H. Moulton) thinks that some of Christ's teaching may have been delivered in Greek, if the composition of his audience indicated such a choice. For Southerners it would invariably be Aramaic. (See art. in Peake's Commentary, p. 592.)

(*b*) *Matthew*. Then came the two great teaching gospels, founded on the narrative framework of Mark. The acute need for fact once appeased, there grew a natural demand for every possible word of Jesus that could be salved from oblivion.

Matthew, who most probably did not write

[1] The cognate language which superseded Hebrew. It is found in the Old Testament in Daniel and Ezra. It used to be called Chaldee, the Jews definitely adopting it during the Exile. With Hebrew, Assyrian, Phœnician, Arabic and others it forms the Semitic group. As Prof. Peake says: "It (Hebrew) was slowly strangled by Aramaic." This occurred after the Exile so that Aramaic was the language of Palestine in the time of Christ. Some of our Lord's words gain a peculiar point when turned back into Aramaic, e.g., plays on words, etc. It is curious that none of our Gospels was finally written in Aramaic, Matthew's especially, seeing that it was directed to the Jews, and considering that behind it undoubtedly stood an Aramaic source. Dr. C. J. Torrey believes that all the gospels are Greek versions of Aramaic originals.

the gospel, had certainly made a collection of isolated fragments of teaching which had fallen from our Lord's lips. "Matthew," says Papias, "wrote his oracles (logia, i.e., sayings) in Hebrew, and each man interpreted them as he would." "Interpreted" must mean "translated," and "Hebrew" must mean "Aramaic."

Whoever put together this gospel made use of this collection of Matthew's; and as that collection is the main differential factor in this gospel, it is reasonable that the finished work should bear Matthew's name in the absence of any knowledge as to who was the ultimate editor.

You will picture, then, this unknown compiler with the following documents in front of him:

(i) Mark's gospel, which forms his framework, though he ventures to alter its order somewhat.

(ii) The mass of teaching collected by Matthew, the disciple. As an ex-customs officer he would be skilled in the clerkly function of writing. The teaching was probably set in just a modicum of narrative to hold it together, and the "document" is usually known as Q (German *Quelle*, i.e., source) for want of a better name. It has not survived and therefore we cannot give its limits.

(iii) A collection of Testimonia or Old Testament proof texts relating to the Messiah, which the writer of the gospel employs freely with the

introductory formula: "In order that the scripture might be fulfilled," etc.[1]

(iv) Palestinian traditions, including Infancy stories.

The gospel was written particularly for Jewish Christians, whereas Mark's was rather for Gentiles. Mark explains Jewish phrases and ideas for his readers, and he is concerned chiefly with drawing a straightforward picture of Jesus as Peter remembered him. But, whilst Mark describes our Lord's human emotions and gestures with vivid touches, Matthew is concerned to show to Jews that, from their own scriptures, Jesus of Nazareth is clearly the Messiah foretold by those scriptures. This conception involves a certain detachment from the more human and simple touches of Mark. "Matthew" was probably written between A.D. 80-90. (There are, however, able scholars who date the first three gospels and the Acts much earlier.)

(*c*) *Luke.* The gospel according to Luke would date also somewhere round about A.D. 85-90. It was unquestionably written by Luke, the doctor-companion of Paul in his later journeys and Roman imprisonment.

In determining the authorship of this gospel our attention is first arrested by the obvious

[1] Two distinguished scholars, F. C. Burkitt and Rendel Harris identify the collection of "Sayings" made by Matthew with (iii), rather than (ii), but our alternative is more generally accepted.

fact that it must come from the same hand as the Acts. Style and outlook are identical; the dedication in each is to Theophilus; also, the Acts speaks of a previous book by the author. We then notice that when the author of the Acts speaks of "we" instead of "he" (i.e., Paul), the only known companion never ruled out is Luke.[1] The conclusion, thus, seems irresistible.

The Acts probably followed, as a second volume, very soon afterwards. Some think, from the fact that Acts contains no record of Paul's death, and for other reasons, that a third volume was meditated, perhaps even written and now lost. But Luke may well have thought that the arrival at Rome represented the natural and most dramatic climax of Paul's life. Or Luke may possibly himself have been arrested and martyred before he could write any more. We have no information concerning him after the events that close the Acts.

The sources for Luke's gospel were:

(i) Mark.

(ii) Q—the teaching in slight narrative framework attributed to Matthew, the disciple. Probably, however, he employed a different edition, for his use of it varies somewhat from that of the compiler of "Matthew's" gospel.

(iii) A great amount of teaching, contained in chapters x-xix, which is unique. He must

[1] The actual name is supplied in Col. iv, 14, Philem 24, 2 Tim. iv, 11.

have tapped a special source or several sources for this. Some of the material he may have gained through Paul, or in investigation round about Cæsarea whilst Paul was being detained there.

(iv) He has certain narratives of the infancy of Christ, as "Matthew" had, only they are mostly different from his.

Renan has described this gospel as "the most beautiful book ever written."

These three gospels are known as synoptic because they take substantially the same view of Christ's life and death. They are quite distinct from John. A diagram from Dr. Peake's commentary[1] will explain more than a great deal of description (p. 125).

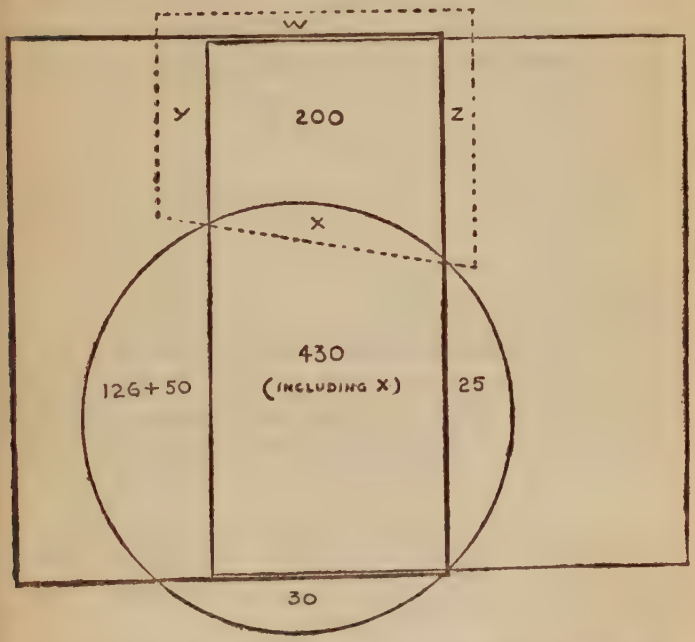
The numbers represent verses.
The circle represents Mark, whose total number of verses is 661.
The heavy-lined rectangle represents Matthew, whose total number of verses is 1,068.
The thin-lined rectangle on the right represents Luke, whose total number of verses is 1,149.
The dotted-lined figure represents Q.

You will see (i) that all Mark save about thirty verses is in either Matthew or Luke, if not in both.

(ii) that Matthew and Luke share some two

[1] Page 680.

hundred verses outside of Mark, which corresponds roughly to Q. We can be approximately sure that something is from Q *only when two people have it.* Therefore w, x, y, z, must be inserted as an uncertain fringe of Q. Some part of Mark's



agreement with the other two *may* mean Q (hence, x). Similarly, some part of Matthew's and Luke's unique material *may* mean Q (y and z respectively), and we must assume that some portion of Q was not reproduced at all (i.e., w),

but naturally we cannot assign an exact number of verses to these shadowy sub-sections as such.

(iii) that the definitely shared amount of Q is at least two hundred verses or about one-fifth of the gospel in the case of Matthew and Luke.[1]

(*d*) *John*. With "John's" gospel we enter upon the storm ground of the New Testament.

(i) Who wrote it?

(ii) When? and where?

(iii) Is it history, as we understand history?

I shall not enter into the controversy here, but shall merely state that:

(i) So far, John, son of Zebedee—or a disciple of his—has not been proved to be out of the question. His is, in fact, still the most likely name. John of Ephesus (a presbyter) is his next rival.

(ii) Suggested dates range between A.D. 90–110; obviously not later, since the gospel was well known to Papias as well as Polycarp. The place was probably Ephesus.

(iii) One asks the third question to indicate that the rearrangement of events is very noticeable,

[1] I have to acknowledge here the permission to reproduce this diagram, kindly granted not only by Dr. Streeter, whose work it is, but also by the Editor, and the Publishers of *The Commentary* (T. C. and E. C. Jack, Ltd.).

and that the whole story has been written as though after a considerable lapse of time, and from a point of view in which meditation and reflection on the events have had a great share in the writing. So characteristic are these factors that frequently it is hard to say when Jesus has finished speaking and the writer's comment has begun; one flows so easily into the other. In a sense, it is a record of a personal experience of Christ in the inner life of the author's soul, the record drawing on the events of His earthly life rather as illustrations of that experience and of the philosophy produced by it, than as naked objective history such as we receive from Mark. He places the Crucifixion a day earlier than the synoptists appear to do, relative to the Passover; the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning instead of the end of the Ministry; etc.

Nevertheless, in many senses, it is the most wonderfully beautiful book in the world, and in its spiritual illumination must almost surely rank supreme.

(*B*)

ANTECEDENTS OF OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

Our task in the New Testament was comparatively simple, because almost every book was written by a single author, and did not pass through the hands of a variety of compilers and editors. Also, even if one includes the writing of the sources of the gospels, the whole of the New Testament was completed approximately within a hundred years.

But, with the Old Testament, we find a very different state of things, the growth of their immediate antecedents and the actual books spreading over the best part of a thousand years.

Later on I shall try to take a bird's-eye view of the Old Testament, believing that the average reader is either terrified or sheerly at a loss as to how to tackle so huge and seemingly so inchoate a bulk. I can remember how, once, when a small boy, under the impetus of a steady resolve, I ploughed not only through Genesis and

Exodus, but Leviticus and Numbers also and on as far as Ruth before I was embogged by the sheer inertia of the environing mass. I was about eleven at the time and lacked the least thread of guide to the labyrinth. I shall try to treat it as the concurrent literature of a people on the march. The keynote to strike at beginning and end, I believe, is that the Hebrews were *a chosen people*. If anyone questions that, he has a right to his opinion, but he must, nevertheless, admit the following fact: The Hebrews *believed* that they were a chosen people. The unique feature of their history and of its record in the Old Testament is the way it refers everything to God, and measures everything as success or failure by whether it might be held to have pleased God or not. They did not always assess God's will rightly according to our judgment, but it was, at least, their ideal to try. Similarly they did not always follow obediently what truth they had, but it was their general tendency so to strive. These facts make their history unique and their self-consciousness unique; they were what we should call a theocentric people, God at their heart. Now, when a people consistently feels in its heart (i.e., deeply in the best minds and spirits which it produces, as well as vaguely in its masses) that it is an instrument of God, that it must devote itself to a divine purpose, we may fairly safely take it that it *is* an instrument of God, and that God really *has* a purpose

for it. It will often be a clumsy instrument, and it will often misconstrue the divine purpose. Every big European nation has done that in its time, and yet, spasmodically, every nation has temporarily served a purpose, is so doing, or probably will; though frequently when it has *boasted* itself most as the Lord's instrument it has certainly seemed least to be doing the Lord's work. There have been varying degrees of God-consciousness in various nations from time to time, but none has ever shown anything like the sensitiveness to the relation of a Personal God (I use the phrase for lack of a better, in order to contrast it with the commoner oriental conceptions of a "diffused" God) or the consistency of vocation evidenced by this Semitic tribe of the Hebrews that melted later into the Jewish race.

We shall never, then, understand the Old Testament at all until we grasp this, and realise that Abraham is their national hero and first ancestor[1] not simply because he was the founder of their nation, but partly, at least, because he obeyed a call of God to go out into the void, and because the nation which should spring from him was the promise and gift of God under nearly impossible circumstances. And, if more were needed to make him the idol and ideal of

[1] Even if Abraham was, as some maintain, an eponymous ancestor, i.e., one "created" as fountain-head of their history by after ages, he still illustrates the same consciousness and belief. Such and such a man was the prototype of their race, a man of faith, obedience, and keen sense of God.

his race, it would be just this Godward devotion that led him to hold even his child, the casket that contained the very seed of the nation, at the command of God for sacrifice on demand. (Gen. xxii.) With Abraham we seem to tread the first groundwork of history, even if uncertainly at times. All before that is a mixture of myth, legend, and allegory, but not *necessarily* less true on that account. For, whilst history can be so distorted in the writing as to be actually falsehood, either in its actual narrative or in the inferences it wrongly suggests, even so an allegory or a novel, touching human character, can be eternally true, although the people in either, like the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan, Adam and Eve, Cain and Jonah, Peter Pan and Pickwick had never an existence in historical fact.

As Professor Burkitt says[1]: "The first thing that an unsophisticated little child asks about a story is: 'Is it true?' It is indeed the most vital and important question to ask, but the answer cannot generally be contained in a simple Yes or No. And the child gradually learns, as he grows up, that 'Is it true?' must often be the last and not the first question to be asked." Such a question often requires for its answering a great deal of preliminary investigation of claims and much study of origins; it demands, moreover, a widening definition of what is to be classed as

[1] *Gospel History and its Transmission*, p. 3.

truth, as I have hinted above. The Professor continues: "There is more than one kind of truth in portraiture. There is the truth of the photograph and the truth of the impressionist artist. A complete set of drawings for St. Paul's might very well fail to reveal the true architectural relation of the cathedral to the great City, which can be suggested by a picture, faulty and inaccurate as it may be in many a detail." It is in this way, also, that we often find a grossly exaggerated cartoon giving a clearer picture of a man's personality and character than the sheerly exact photograph. True, the camera cannot lie; true, equally, that it has no intuition.

We come somewhat slowly to the realisation that ultimately it is ideas and characters that constitute the true or the false, all events and actions being so many reflections of those ideas or characters rippled and distorted in varying degree. Once grasped, this conviction makes free men of us, and we conceive truth at its inmost. The highest note of all is struck in our faith in the conception that Truth is Personal, that it all emanates from one Person Whom we call God, and Whom Christ calls Our Father. Human beings, made in His image, strive to re-express the truth, thus imprisoned within them, along the various channels with which they are by their Maker equipped. Some of the most wonderful of these are the dramatic instinct, the sense of poetry, the imaginative vision. Through

all these faculties or propensities, then, we may expect truth to flow or, at least, to filter, as well as through that narrative instinct which results in what we call history. We shall find all of these "outgoings" enshrined in expression in the Old Testament. Some one may argue that the dramatic may run away with itself, the imagination overstep the bounds of credibility, the poetic become the fantastic. Yes, but the case is the same with the historic impulse. For events can breed so wild a travesty of truth by way of inference that even our steady pedestrian history may become a misleading lie. No, by whatever channel it emerge, the outflow must stand the test of reason, experience or answering instinct. But we must deny to none of the means its place in the divine economy.

Now, before proceeding to link on the books of the Old Testament to the progressive stages in the national life to which they belong, we must first see how those books came into being.

Among such a nation one would expect to find, as one actually does, that from time to time would arise poet, seer, lawgiver, statesman, historian, aphorist, allegorist, romancer; and we shall find similarly in the literature born of them, often after generations of brooding and meditation and transmission, the resultant poetry, prophecies, legal codes, political principles, histories, parables, allegorical legends, and romances. But it is not in the Hebrew to tell a romance,

write history, make laws, or to use any of those other vessels of thought, without eliciting a moral, even if it be but a biased and prejudiced moral. Everything that is in him is, of instinct, related to God. We may wonder. We must wonder. We must go on wondering about that ubiquitous and perennial instinct in the Hebrew, until we give up in puzzlement and despair of ever finding another solution than that this people is somewhat uniquely placed. It is a people, a whole people, with a sense of vocation. In the end we may find it more difficult to do anything else than accept, as explanation, the conviction of this people that God had chosen and called it to be a recipient of revelation in an especial sense, and not only a recipient, but, as its truest seers always divined, a mediator of that revelation to other peoples.

Three literary strata are to be pierced in our upward movement from buried origins before we reach the surface which the Old Testament books now constitute.

I

THE COMMON INHERITANCE

The first consists of materials shared by the tribes of the whole Mesopotamian or Babylonian area. As some of these materials were oral, we must use the adjective "literary" in an elastic sense. Of what nature? Well, there would probably be muscular romances told round the Mesopotamian camp fire, after the fashion of the later Arabian Nights' entertainments, but certainly much cruder than they. Some such, of Hebrew flavour, have been incorporated into the mechanical framework of the Book of "Judges." Probably, also, there would be a multitude of proverbs and aphorisms. The oriental loves to express himself in an epigram. But, chiefly and very definitely, this shared stratum reveals a basis of law on the one hand, just as Roman Law subserves British and Latin Europe, and, on the other hand, legend, in much the same way as the

Norse sagas underlie North-Western European folk-lore.

It will be useful to give definite proofs at this point, not only to establish the point at issue, but that they may serve as sub-structure for conclusions on Inspiration which we must one day reach. Let us take, then, one precise illustration of each of the two main phases of what we will call the Common Inheritance or Common Deposit.

(*a*) *Laws.* It is a long time since the laws of Moses were at all generally supposed to emanate from the mind and pen of Moses as the sole instrument of God in that matter. It may come as news to some that even the Hebrew people cannot claim originality as instruments. Assuming, as an approximately correct date for Moses and the Exodus, the year 1230 B.C.,[1] it becomes clear that the actual Laws of Moses cannot date much before 1200 B.C. at earliest. Now, a certain block of black diorite stone discovered in A.D. 1901 at Susa contains part of the laws of Hammurabi (the Amraphel of Genesis xiv? a useful external hint, if true, of the historical character of Abraham). He was a product of a Semite migration from Amurru (the home of the Amorites) which founded a dynasty in Babylonia (lasting from 2225–1926 B.C.). Hammurabi would date

[1] Merenptah, hitherto accepted as the Pharaoh of the Exodus, reigned from 1234–1214 B.C. But see note on pp. 166, 167.

then about 2100 B.C., some 800 *years before Moses was born.*[1]

The parallelism of the two sets of laws is so extraordinary that we shall be left with but two possible conclusions. Either Moses used and adapted Hammurabi, or both of them employed a common deposit at the disposal of the related tribes, i.e., the ancient Sumerian code.

The Book of the Covenant, which would include any contribution likely to have come from Moses, is found in Exodus xx–xxiii, and is from our earliest strand of Laws (i.e., JE, of which more will be said later). I shall follow Dr. Paterson Smyth at this point and adopt his excerpts from the slavery laws of the codes of Hammurabi and Moses.

Hammurabi. 2100 B.C.	*Moses.* 1200 B.C.[1]
§§ 196, 200. If a man hath caused the loss of another's eye, then some one shall cause his eye to be lost. If he hath broken another's limb (or tooth) some one shall break his limb (or tooth).	Exod. xxi. 22. If any mischief follow then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.
§ 199, 201. If he hath caused the loss of the eye or limb of a man's servant then shall he pay half his price. If he hath caused the loss of a tooth or a freed slave, then shall he pay one-third of a mina of silver.	Exod. xxi. 26. If a man smite the eye (or tooth) of his servant or of his maid and destroy it, then shall he let him go for his eye's (or tooth's) sake.

[1] See note pp. 166,167. Hammurabi's laws are quite comprehensive. There are allusions to law-courts, and the legislation includes provision for title-deeds, regulation of tenure, adoption, inheritance, doctors' fees, marriage settlements and divorce.

Hammurabi. 2100 B.C.	*Moses.* 1200 B.C.[1]
§ 250. If a savage ox in his charge hath gored a man and caused him to die, then that case hath no recompense. § 251. But if the goring ox hath made known his vice that he gores and the owner hath not blunted his horns or secured the ox, and this ox gores and slays a free-born man, then shall his owner pay.	Exod. xxi. 28, 29. If an ox gore a man or woman that they die the owner of the ox shall be quit. But if the ox were wont to gore in time past, or it hath been testified to the owner and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or woman, then shall the ox be stoned and the owner put to death.
§ 252. If it gore a man's servant, the owner shall pay one-third of a mina of silver.	Exod. xxi. 32. If the ox gore a servant he shall give unto the master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.
§ 125. If a man hath placed anything on deposit and something has been lost the owner of the house shall make good and then seek out and recover it from the thief.	Exod. xxii. 7. If a man shall deliver unto his neighbour money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house, if the thief be found he shall pay double.

Various inferences can be drawn from this comparison. In the first place, the likeness is too considerable to be attributed to coincidence. Secondly, in every case where change is made, it is for the better. E.g., in Section 2, the status of the slave is exalted. Hammurabi leaves one to assume that the master of the injured slave gets the money, as though for a damaged beast or chattel. Moses frees the injured *slave*, thus allocating the compensation more justly. Also,

[1] For date of Moses see note pp. 166, 167.

Those who would like to learn more of the Code of Hammurabi I would refer to the work of that name by C. H. Johns.

in Section 3, as possibly in 2, the woman is put on a level with man quite explicitly. Moreover, in this, as in 4, Moses tightens up the penalties of careless selfishness. First offence, in each code, goes free. That is fair. Every dog is allowed one bite. The owner can reasonably plead innocence of viciousness in the animal. At a second offence Hammurabi makes the owner pay money. Moses tightens up the law here. What had happened is manifestly this. The owner took a chance. He kept the marked beast under some control, or, perhaps, not even that, arguing: "Well, at the worst, I *may* have to pay money; if I destroy the ox I lose my money *for certain*." Moses scotches this selfish disregard of human life by making a second offence constitute *a death penalty for the owner*. Let him perish with his ox! The upshot of this was, of course, the humane result that a goring ox was always killed, and that right quickly.

I have included the illustration on banking because it illustrates again the astuteness of Moses in adaptation. Hammurabi's is very primitive banking indeed. One would imagine that the upshot of his law was that no one would undertake banking except at most exorbitant charges, so as to cover the allotted penalties of loss. Moses extricates the banker from an impossible position. The weakness of the original law lay in its making the banker alone interested in and responsible for thief-insurance. Moses makes the banker's

position more of a treasurership. In the absence of any police or insurance companies, such as a modern banker can count upon, Moses neatly improvises a co-operative guardianship on the part of the depositors. Instead of making the banker pay for his unhappy and perhaps unavoidable disaster, Moses stipulates that the *thief* shall pay, *if*, then *when*, he has been caught. Here you have at once a "voluntary conscription" of creditors united in the pursuit of their property. Their enthusiasm is increased by the knowledge that it is "double or quits," and the same fact makes the would-be thief ponder twice on his predatory scheme before he sets it in operation.

Now this JE or primitive code (a combination of J and E, explained on pp. 150f.), is our earliest strand of laws in the Old Testament, dating in its present form in our Exodus at about 800 B.C., and is manifestly the minimum of law for a nomad or, better perhaps, primitive agricultural community. The contribution of D (the Deuteronomic "school" of Laws) gives us an improved code in Deut. xii–xxvi, about 620 B.C. Again, the Priestly code, P (possibly seventy years later), is responsible for the rest of the Pentateuch laws, i.e., the remainder of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers.

The point I am immediately interested to emphasise is that we ought to let a fact like this parallelism lie quietly simmering in our minds against the day when we feel we must

form our opinion concerning Inspiration and Revelation. Here is Moses taking something which he finds ready to hand, but unquestionably improving on it.[1]

(*b*) *Legend.* This is best illustrated by a Deluge tablet discovered by George Smith, the Assyriologist, in the Nineveh palace library at Rassam in 1872. Here we have, in twelve tablets, the Epic of King Gilgamesh,[2] the eleventh being the one with which we are concerned.[3]

After reading this extract we should go again to Genesis (vi–viii) and read the Old Testament story, noting the parallelism, and whether the tendency is up or down. As "Gilgamesh" is reputably dated at 2000 B.C. and our earliest account (for there are two flood stories in Genesis) not before the ninth century, it is clear that ours is not the original. Again, therefore, the Genesis edition is based either on the Assyrian or on the common Saga deposit.

The hero of the Assyrian version is called Hasisadra, and hails from Surripak, on the

[1] Two charming illustrations of neighbourly courtesy hailing from the portion of the law that is most likely to be from Moses himself must be quoted here (Ex. xxiii, 4, 9): "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray thou shalt surely bring it back to him again." What a dazzling little foregleam of Christ's teaching! And again: "And a stranger thou shalt not oppress: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

[2] Cf. *Our Bible in the Making*, p. 82.

[3] This contains the adventures of the hero of Uruk in search of immortality. Again we get a link with Genesis x, 10, where Uruk is probably equivalent to Erech.

FRAGMENTS OF THE DELUGE TABLETS

The Eleventh Tablet of the Epic of Gilgamesh containing the Deluge Story.

[*Face page* 142.

Euphrates. The gods warn him of their intention to flood the earth. By their advice he builds a ship one hundred and eighty feet high, and one hundred and eighty feet in beam (a massive top-heavy affair that would tax our Clydeside firms despite all their modern machinery!). Like the Genesis model, it is pitched within and without, and has a door, which, in this case, the builder closes upon himself. With him are enclosed beasts, etc., of every denomination to keep seed alive on the earth. Then came the terrible cataclysm at which the gods in heaven were evidently frightened. There sprang up within them a panic-stricken realisation of having gone too far this time, of having overdone their expression of wrath. They wept copiously! Down below, Hasisadra idles the days away in his Leviathan, which seems to need no navigation. During the six days duration of the flood-tide he spends his time watching the corpses floating by, so we are told, otiosely counting them perchance! At the week the tide turns; at the fortnight the colossus sits neatly, high and dry, upon the Nizir range.

Thus we continue:

"When the seventh day arrived
I brought out a dove and let it go.
The dove went to and fro.
As there was no resting place it turned back.
I brought forth a swallow and let it go.

"As there was no resting place it turned back.
I brought forth a raven and let it go:
The raven went forth and saw the decrease of the waters:
It ate, it waded, it croaked, it turned not back.
Then I sent forth everything to the four winds:
I offered sacrifice.
The gods smelt the savour,
The gods smelt the goodly savour,[1]
The gods gathered like flies over the sacrifice."

He then continues to record how the goddess Ishtar lighted up the rainbow, and how the gods pleaded that *all* should not be destroyed—the sinners, yes, but not the righteous.

The last coincidence, mentioned in the footnote, is merely the most naïve and delightful of a long succession which I need not labour. A glance through Genesis vi–viii will suffice. But I would first call to notice the fact that the Old Testament writers have chastened the story, giving it a purer religious bent, a less barbaric drift. There is one God, for example, instead of a vague plurality. A touch here, another there, and the story lights up into not only literary finish but moral significance. That, one would venture to suggest, may be construed as Inspiration. God's method is always to take the best that is to hand and make it better, content, in His wonderful patience, to lift life a stage, a little stage, and then another little stage, building on men's accom-

[1] Cf. Genesis viii. 21: "The Lord smelled the sweet savour."

plishment and working through men's gifts. It was as though God tried to use men's notions of truth and their tentative approaches to Himself.

Sometimes under the whittling process a notion would break up and fail like a pencil of rotten cedar beneath the knife. Even so, sacrifice, a base conception at best, was pruned and purified, only to be rejected by prophets, and condemned at last by Christ in the form under which it survived in His day.

Prophecy, again, had its evolution, but took the right instead of the wrong turning, thus achieving immortality instead of destruction. With Samson, when the "spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him," the experience connoted a berserk rage in which the man simply ran amok, his strength the strength of ten because he was to all intents a raving madman. Later you find prophecy exemplified by wild fits accompanied by foaming at the mouth. In this state the possessed ones threw themselves wildly about—possibly involuntarily—in a species of convulsion, babbling incoherent mouthings. Probably of some such character were Saul's seizures, whereupon the bystanders, seeing their lusty young acquaintance in such dishevelment, inquired, maybe with a sneer, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" Such prophecy occupied no high place of religious esteem even in the minds of contemporaries, but it caused fear for the most part and a superstitious awe. Later comes the

necromantic and clairvoyant stage, exemplified by the Witch of Endor and, in some rather more respectable guise, by Samuel himself (for Saul was to consult him as to the whereabouts of the strayed asses). Through stages, then, of appalling ebullition, uncontrolled denunciation and uncanny trance, the experience passed upwards by graded refinements until it reached the stage where prophecy was nourished upon mystic communion in the silences of desert and wilderness, and expressed the fruits of such moods in reasoned pleading and appeal, which involved no suspension of normality and were directed to spiritual elevation rather than occult frightfulness. Paul clearly discourages a return to earlier methods by making little of "speaking with tongues," a frenzied babble which some were inclined to value. *Edification* is made the test.

Each step upward was strange and unexpected, but was exemplified in the life of some man to whom the light had come. Such a result we may rightly term Revelation, for Revelation comes in this fashion, as when we actually mark successive lightening of the shadows under the rise of the morning sun.

II

LOST BOOKS OF THE MIDDLE STRATUM

To the next stratum belongs probably the collection of primitive verse, devotional psalms, proverbs, etc., into literary form together with actual books of history, personal memoirs, and histories of the patriarchs. Also there would be a continuous series of editions of laws. Of these there are traces and relics which do not admit of denial or even differences of opinion. The book of Jasher, for instance, evidently had a separate existence previous to our book of Samuel,[1] and looks like having been a collection of paladin songs and elegies. The compiler of Samuel used the book, but for us it is lost except for the excerpts thus made. Again, there was the book of martial narrative, the Book of the Wars of the Lord,[2] to whose existence we have reference but no more. Yet again, Shemaiah was obviously a prophet who wrote his memoirs. You have

[1] 2 Samuel i. 18, Joshua x. 13.
[2] Numbers xxi. 14.

them used, for instance, in Chronicles (2 Chron. xii. 3f). The original, however, has not survived. One might go on to enumerate other books, now lost, that lie behind our Old Testament Books and are quoted or referred to there, such as The Book of Jehu, of Iddo the Seer, of Nathan, of Gad, etc.[1]

There were court annals in embryo noted down by official recorders (2 Sam. viii. 16, 1 Kings iv. 3); proverbs collected by the men of Hezekiah, etc. (Prov. xxv. 1); and sermons of prophets laid by and used later in the compiling of the records of those prophets as we now have them in our books. We note, then, in passing, that God has not prevented the loss and destruction of many books which might have entered into and enriched our notions of progressive revelation. This fact tends to make us cautious of mechanical views of Providence in the matter of Holy Writ, and chary of assuming, without warrant, that God is going inevitably to overrule the carelessness of men in safe-guarding books of possibly vital worth, any more than He

[1] Whilst Shemaiah (as I shall show) and others are definitely established as having had a separate existence, some may signify merely passages in our existing books; e.g., that particular *passage* from Samuel or Kings referring to "Nathan" or "Jehu" (1 Chron. xxix. 29; 2 Chron. ix. 29). In the same way we find Moses quoted in "the Bush," i.e., in the "Bush" passage of Exodus, just as we might quote a chapter for identification purposes (Luke xx. 37). It does not imply that there was a separate book called "The Bush." Sufficient evidence, however, exists to show the distinct identity, as separate books, of Shemaiah, Jasher and others.

has over-ruled a similar carelessness in the copying of vital manuscripts.

What we can, perhaps, see with growing clearness is God at work behind men, uplifting the existing best and then bettering it. Always, however, we fancy we see Him working through men, subjecting Himself the while to their created limitations.

III

EFFORTS AT COMPILATION

In the third stratum we find definite hints of these books being grouped according to some specific school of thought, in the same way as we find laws collected into codes that bespeak a similarity of outlook. At this point, then, we must examine the mysterious letters, J, E, D and P.

These letters are applied to both laws and history to denote a point of view. And one interacts on the other. If, for instance, a man belonging to the D school believes that God's Law is to the effect that He be worshipped only at a central sanctuary, then that man in handling the history of any portion of the monarchy, will write down a King as having done good or evil according as that King either condemned or tolerated the high places.

J stands for Jahweh (i.e., The Lord, erroneously written Jehovah)[1] because this name is used

[1] When the Massoretes, inserting vowel points, came to the tetragrammeton J H W H, which must not be pronounced in reading, they applied to it the vowels of the alternative word Adonai (Lord) which was always read in its place. Hence J–a–H–o–W–a–H. Of course there is no such word. The notion of a sacrosanct name was based on Ex. xx. 7.

for the deity by the first writer or school of writers.

E stands for Elohim (i.e., God) and is used by a writer who had apparently taken to heart the words of Exodus vi. 2–3: "And God spake unto Moses and said unto him, 'I am Jahweh, and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob as God Almighty[1] but by my name Jahweh I was not known unto them.'" After reading this, anybody turning back to Ex. iii. 15 will get a shock: "And God said moreover unto Moses: 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel:—"Jahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you."'" Obviously this cannot be the same man who, three chapters later, is going to write the words in chapter vi. He is a different man, who either does not know of vi. 2-3, or else knows, but is not impressed by the passage.

So that, whether you like it or not, you are forthwith faced with a question of at least dual authorship. And in spite of chapter vi apparently dating the revelation you find the name, thus revealed, used freely throughout Genesis.

From this and similar evidence scholars have built up the theory of the two literary schools, J and E.

But let it not be supposed that these are the

[1] i.e., El Shaddai. If this further title for God represents a third school, as is possible, the clues are not of sufficient value to be followed here.

only distinguishing marks. Style, outlook, conception of God, as well as differences of detail in duplicated narratives—all these factors make the books stand out like patchwork quilts when one knows how to look at them.

J belongs to the ninth century, and E to the first half of the eighth approximately. J shows keen, earnest, spiritual characteristics, and seeks to illustrate God's ways with man from the beginning. God to J is a glorified superman who walks in the garden in the cool of the evening. E, who dates somewhere about the time of Amos and Hosea, refrains from the tremendous name throughout Genesis, and views God as a more majestic and distant Being.[1]

J and E become merged after a short time like railway lines that run parallel for a way and then swerve into one track, and a JE type ensues; where the J characteristic, being more vital and primitive, shows up more strongly, whilst D and P carry on the tradition of the grandeur and majesty of a distant God.

D stands for the Deuteronomic school which produced the book of Deuteronomy as we have it now, some time after the finding of the roll of the law in the Temple in Josiah's reign (2 Kings xxii). Whether the school existed before that event is matter of opinion. Many think that the finding of this roll, probably written

[1] J and E are sometimes referred to respectively as the Bibles of Southern Judah and Northern Israel.

by some enthusiast in the evil days of Manasseh or Amon, and put away in hiding to be discovered at a more convenient season, virtually created the Deuteronomic school, devotees of the great central sanctuary and of the extirpation of heathen abuses. It would further appear that this school, in turn, re-created the book of Deuteronomy as we have it now, also casting its own film of revision over the existing JE narratives. By this word "re-creation" I do not mean to imply serious alterations. In fact, the quotations given in 2 Kings xxii, as illustrations from the roll found in the Temple, are contained also in our Deuteronomy, and the main theme, i.e., the abolition of the "high places" (local shrines) is, as I have said, common to both. Therefore the book found was either Deuteronomy or substantially the same. Jeremiah's writings show him saturated with the same teaching. Whoever was responsible for it had made a tremendous spiritual advance on the materials (JE) at his disposal for meditation. To take but one illustration: the ten commandments, as given in Deuteronomy v. 6–21, are distinctly finer than the better known version in Exodus xx; especially, for instance, in the sabbath day commandment and the motive given therefor (i.e., rest for servants and a period for quiet meditation and remembrance). These are reasons that stand the test of time, and appear equally valid in our own generation. The same cannot be said for Ex. xx. 11.

The rise of the great prophet Jeremiah is contemporary with this movement. So the Deuteronomic School was probably at work long before the Exile (586–536), but existed through that period and even for some time afterwards.

Finally, after the Exile, flourished the Priestly School, P, whose great profession is the glory of God and the exaltation of the priest as His servant. The records of the monarchy, the now wrecked and discredited monarchy, are feverishly worked over, and good care is taken that it shall never again raise its diminished head. The Kingship had been made to appear by D as a wilful and perverse demand of the people against the wish of God and also against Samuel, His mouthpiece. But P, in Chronicles, diverges still further from what appear to be the facts, and idealises all the "good"[1] kings whilst debasing all the "bad" ones. Like that of D, his plan also is to exalt the priesthood at the expense of the monarchy. So easy is it to reconstruct history to suit a theory whose test is eventual success or failure. The interesting thing is the fact that these revisers, or the editors who finally brought our books together, should have allowed the primitive J to continue side by side with the dutifully reconstructed D or P accounts. Some very interesting contradictions await our study as a result of this idiosyncrasy of the final editors. Apparently it was their fashion to stitch together

[1] "Good" and "bad" according to the priestly point of view.

all points of view impartially, just as it was unquestionably their custom to borrow sections from any book they pleased without apology or acknowledgment, in a way that would make the modern worshipper of copyright stand aghast. In itself, apart from its revising tendencies, P was a collection of ceremonial laws put together, probably under Ezekiel's guidance,[1] during the Exile. Their principle was a terrible one from an impartial historian's point of view, for it consisted in reading back institutions and ideas of their own day into the earlier history which they thus doctored to their taste. But all with a good motive! Thus they believed God was to be glorified by their eliminating errors committed in those darker days before the P illumination had broken upon the world! It is P for instance which lays down the law quite definitely about the name of the deity in the passage we have studied (i.e., Ex. vi. 2, 3), and no P historian, always strict on historical accuracy in a matter of ceremonial, would dream of using it in a

[1] Many critics exclude Ezekiel from the Priestly school, i.e., they make P begin after Ezekiel. The main ground for excluding him is his attitude to Levites. To D all Levites are Priests. Ezekiel degrades them from being servers at local shrines to doing menial duties in the Temple, thus finally dismantling the local shrines and completing the central object of D. The true priestly function he now restricts to the Sons of Zadok, i.e., the Jerusalem priests (Ezek. xliv). Ezekiel is deeply concerned about legislation for the future of the Levites, but the Priestly code treats the transformation as an accomplished fact and the Levites as established, cheerfully established, as servers in the Temple of which the Zadokite Sons of Aaron are in supreme command.

narrative concerning events previous to that announcement.[1]

There remains now to see these four preliminary strands gathered together into the final Pentateuch, the "Prophets" collected and added, and, finally, the "Writings" attached. This, however, will be treated more conveniently in Part III, The Canon. It may just be noted here that the material from these four sources supplied also the bulk of the substance for Joshua, Judges and Samuel, and that these latter, as we have them, were very likely the work of the same editors.

The next thing to be done is to take a bird's-eye view of Jewish history, attaching as we go the books of the Old Testament to the period whose history they narrate. I think a synopsis in headlines may bring the task into perspective at this point. And, as we are studying a history of a *people*, and not of a collection of books, I shall deal with the historical books in the order of the history they relate, not necessarily according to the dates of their composition. The latter will transpire as we go along, especially if 900, 800, (700), 600, 500 B.C. are remembered as rough dates for the four strands J, E, (JE), D, P, respectively. From time to time I want to call attention to a few cases which will illustrate how these four strands are plaited into our present books.

[1] A delightful illustration of this precision is that he will not even allow the distinction between clean and unclean beasts in his story of the Ark, because at that date Moses had not yet established it.

(C)

HISTORY OF THE JEWS

(Linking thereto each Old Testament Book primarily according to its contents, and only incidentally hinting at its probable date and composition.)

(1) *Early allegories and legends.* (Before Abraham.)

(2) *Dawn of national history and consciousness.* (Abraham to Joshua.)

(3) *Early national life.* (Occupation of promised land.)

(4) *Prophets and Kings.* (Rise and Fall of Monarchy.)

(5) *Prophets and priests.* (Exile.)

(6) *Theocracy or domination by priests.* (After the Exile.)

(7) *Dark time.* (Leading to impact of Greek on Jew.)

I

EARLY ALLEGORIES AND LEGENDS

(Before Abraham)

In designating thus the period before Abraham one is by no means ruling out the possibility of historical vestiges in Genesis. The word "legend" is not equivalent to myth. Whilst we term the earliest stories of the Creation and the Flood "legends" or "allegories," or both, we do not deny that there *was* a creation or that there *may have been* a flood. A legend is a fanciful embroidering of an at least probable phenomenon or person; a myth is a purely imaginative or fantastic conception. Dr. Skinner adequately sums up the difference.[1] Myth, of course, does occur in Genesis, an excellent illustration being the incredible story of the Sons of God in Genesis vi. Myth invades the story of Babel, and mingles with legend in the

[1] "The practically important distinction is that the legend does, and the myth does not, start from the plane of historic fact. The myth is properly a story of the gods, originating in an impression produced in the primitive mind by the more imposing phenomena of nature, while legend attaches itself to the personages and movements of real history."—*International Critical Commentary*, p. viii.

Garden of Eden stories, but it fades out as we approach the stories of the patriarchs. In fact, once clear of Genesis i–xi, we are approaching, *via* the quicksands of glistening legend, the firm ground of history. There *is* firm ground *under* the quicksand of legend, but the airy bubble of myths, evanescent and insubstantial, explodes at a touch. "Allegory," also, is to be justified in my title, for there is not a legend in these chapters that has not been touched by spiritual discernment into a rich vein of truth.

My business here, then, is to handle briefly four of the main legends, Creation, Eden, Flood, and Babel.

(*a*) *Creation* (Gen. i–ii). These stories are the answers to the questions of people who had begun to philosophise about life and to demand a theory of cosmic origins. Our narrative is clearly in duplicate, one strand (Gen. ii. 4 onwards) being a J narrative; the other, later, though given earlier (i–ii. 4), is from the hand of P. I will endeavour to show this theory of duplication to be no mere peddling busyness on the part of critics but an irresistible conclusion.

First, a hint as to details: then to proceed to governing ideas:

(i) In the J narrative animals are made *after* man and brought to him to be named, whilst woman is a *separate* creation (ii. 7–12). In the P narrative animals are made *before* man, and

man and woman *simultaneously* (i. 24–27). There are others, but these will suffice.

(ii) There are complete differences of:

Style. J is simple and dramatic.

P is laborious and wordy, e.g., " fruit tree bearing fruit "—" Let there be . . . and there was "—" Be fruitful and multiply and fill . . ."[1]

Conception of God. Here there is not only the distinction wrought by the use of the name Jahweh in J and Elohim in P, but there is discovered a completely different point of view. J gives us a very friendly superman for God, who *moulds* man from dust, *breathes* life into him, *plants* the garden, *brings* animals, *abstracts* the rib, *builds* woman, and so on. This is all very delightful, primitive and childlike, and we can observe the conception running throughout these legends.

Turning to P, on the other hand, we discover a majestic God, distant and unapproachable, who speaks a word from afar, and things are done in a grand, orderly sequence. There is a stately aloofness that quietly enforces the conception of omnipotence.

[1] The best illustration of ponderous redundancy is: " God created man in His own image, in His own image created He him." Mr. Redlich details this argument excellently in Chap. I of his *Introduction to Old Testament Study.*

Yet there is allegory eloquent in each rendering. The great God of the Universe, majestic in the heavens, whose terrible word is law, whom winds and seas and stars obey —and on the other hand, the human, tender, close-dwelling God, whom men were later to see in Jesus.

These are very beautiful allegories, but the fact that they are merely editions, however much improved artistically and morally, of existing Babylonian legends, dispenses us from any obligation even to mention the word historicity. The geological evidence of the earth's history which demands millions of years, the suggestions of evolution in the animal world, the impossibility of reconciling skulls of early man with the chronology of Genesis, are equally God's surrender of truth to man's search. And these are the signs we must regard as His gift to us in pursuit of the *historical* issue. The Hebrew was pursuing *spiritual* truth, and by the grace of God he has come richly upon it.

(*b*) *The Garden of Eden* (Gen. iii.) Here, for the most part, we have J's work, and his intent is manifestly to answer the query concerning the second problem of existence—the presence of sin. He finds it in an act of disobedience (as later—with Cain and Abel—in an act of violence). One feels at once: "And he's right!"

Something may have been lost in this story, as we are, for instance, introduced a little abruptly to the serpent:—"Now the serpent was more subtle, etc." And that is the first we have heard of him! Also, the Tree of Life, we have reason to think, played a more important part in the original.

That this narrative is from J is again beyond quibble, for here is the friendly God walking in the cool of the evening; with a view, too, to seeing how those two are comporting themselves in regard to His commands. Here is God Himself actually cross-examining the culprits and dispensing justice after the Fall, even as, in another narrative, He personally sets the mark on Cain's forehead after the murder of Abel.

(*c*) *The Flood* (Gen. vi-viii.) We have already noticed that this is from the common stock of Babylonia and its neighbourhood. Again we have two stories which I must not stop to disentangle here. There is the J touch, for instance, when the Lord *shuts* the door on Noah after he is within the Ark, almost like a father tucking up his child in bed. There is P's hand in God's direction after the flood about using animals for food but not the blood. Blood was sacrificially regarded as the life-force, and, therefore, to be offered to God alone. This is a late idea read back into a primitive story, and quite out of place here. But this is typical of P, his object

apparently being to base this conception on a divine sanction from the very beginning of life. This is more than ceremonial, such as the distinction between clean and unclean beasts, which he drives no further back than Moses: it was to be regarded as an elemental principle that blood as the life-force is sacred to God.

Here again I shall not debate the absurdity of treating the narrative as historical, beyond just commenting on the impossibility of shepherding into the ark and feeding the plesiosaurus and diplodocus, the pterodactyl and megalosaurus, or their forbears, coaxing along at the same time the minutest entomological specimens: or, again, of the construction of such a ship to contain them. Even Sir Thomas Browne's ingenious scheme of geometrical cubits will scarcely help us out. The problem of redistribution of animals after a world-wide flood would again present insuperable difficulties. Browne was quaintly disturbed, too, as to how South America was repopulated with fauna, and as to who ferried them over.[1] He is likewise troubled about the flesh provision for carnivora, and about the repopulation

[1] *Pseudodoxia*, p. 78, 337. Also *Religio Medici*, p. xxix and p. 35: "'Tis ridiculous to put off or down the general Flood of Noah in that particular inundation of *Deucalion*: that there was a Deluge once seems not to me so great a Miracle as that there is not one always. . . . There is another secret not contained in Scripture, and that is not only how the distinct Pieces of the world and divided Islands should be first planted by men, but inhabited by Tigers, Panthers, and Bears . . . how there be creatures there (i.e., America) which are not found in this triple continent."

of islands. He decides that carnivora must have developed their taste at a later date, also that there were no islands at the time.

I take these excerpts from a writer of nearly three centuries ago, largely to illustrate that critical difficulties are not of modern creation. But whilst Browne was condemned to try to find a way out, however grotesque, that should save the letter of scripture, time has provided us with a more excellent way.

To find a moral allegory in the flood-story is more difficult than in the others. It carries at least a drastic expression of God's hatred of sin.

(*d*) *Babel* (Gen. xi.) In the Babel story we probably touch almost sheer myth. It is difficult to imagine that any set of men capable of building could be at the same time ignorant of the limiting strains and stresses of building-material, or of so ludicrously underestimating the height of "that inverted bowl we call the sky." It cannot possibly be history, and it is difficult to raise it to the dignity of allegory or even legend.

It is patently a J narrative with its queerly pictured fear of the Superman at this audacious gesture of mankind towards equality. It is manifestly a story to account for the varieties of language, in short to solve the problem of nationality.

We are led, aptly enough, in the next chapter (Gen. xii.) to the origin of the Hebrew nation.

II

DAWN OF NATIONAL HISTORY AND CONSCIOUSNESS

(Abraham to Joshua)

This comprises six stages covered by the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua and involves, for its history, the rest of *Genesis*, much of *Exodus* and *Numbers*, a little of *Deuteronomy*, and all *Joshua;* the rest of these books together with *Leviticus* being full of laws which are supposed to be related to this period, but which consist actually of much later legislation by Deuteronomic and Priestly schools, the same being read back into the older historical setting. It is unlikely that any of these six books (sometimes called Hexateuch) reached final form before Ezra (450 B.C.)[1]

The old strand, E, joins J and P at chaps. xx–xxii of Genesis whilst J and E come into a

[1] Leviticus xvii–xxvi, introduces us to a fifth letter, H, standing for the Holiness Code, a phase of law-making falling between D and P.

complicated tangle over the selling of Joseph to Midianites (or Ishmaelites); and hereafter, for the most part, they are blended.

The narrative is plain enough. At the divine command Abraham leaves Haran for Canaan, keeps in touch with Lot, is driven by famine to Egypt, but returns. Isaac advances matters but little, whilst the family (or tribe, as some think) splits when Jacob and Esau quarrel. Joseph, youngest but one of Jacob's sons, is sold to Egypt, and becomes eventually corn controller for the empire, evolving some very sound economic regulations to guard against famine. His family comes to visit him in time of famine and settles in Goshen, an Egyptian province. There the descendants multiply, are robbed of their privileges as guests by "a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph," are enslaved, and ultimately after a period extending for something less than a century are led out by Moses. Forty years of nomad life, buffetted by sin, circumstance and hostile tribes, brings them to the promised land, and Joshua leads them over the Jordan and into Canaan through Jericho. The campaign divides itself into Sending out spies, Crossing the Jordan, Expanding into new country (victories at Jericho,[1] Ai and over King of Jerusalem), Settling down (as illustrated by the appointment of cities of refuge for the staying of blood-wrath,

[1] Since 1932 Professor Garstang has discovered that Jericho fell by earthquake and fire *c.* 1400 B.C. (*cf.* Joshua vi). The date is fixed largely by pottery relics found in this Bronze Age city, and is confirmed by Professor Newberry of Cairo from scarabs left in the

Josh. xx. 7, 8, a real sign of civilisation).

It is considered possible that there was much less coherence in the tribes by the time Joshua took command, and that he may have been the leader merely of the Joseph tribes. Certainly the book of Judges, which we must study in the next section, gives the impression of isolated "saviours," and it sounds as though it might be describing the guerrilla warfare of the rest of the tribes against the nations that were then in possession of Canaan, thus forming a supplement to Joshua. For, with regard to the book of Joshua, we have to remember that it is not responsible history in our sense of the term, but somewhat of a medley, combining unexamined tradition, legend, and sometimes myth. Numbers, which includes a trifle of history, among laws and regulations nominally Mosaic, is so called because of the two-fold census of the people contained in it. JE and P comprise the book. Leviticus, the book of ceremonial law, we have touched on already, and also Deuteronomy.

royal tombs. If this Fall could be proved to be that recorded in Joshua, then the accepted date, *c.* 1230 B.C. for Moses and the Exodus—with Ramses II (1300–1234) as Pharaoh of the Oppression (Ex. i, 11) and Merenptah (1234–1214) as Pharaoh of the Exodus (Ex. ii, 23; iv, 19)—must yield to *c.* 1445 for the Exodus—with Thothmes III (1501–1447) and Amenhetep II (1447–1421) as the respective Pharaohs. Such proof would (i) contract the uncomfortably wide gap between Abraham and the Exodus. 2100 has been held as the date of Abraham, partly so as to align him with Hammurabi (Amraphel of Gen. xiv?) Cf. C. L. Woolley: *Ur of the Chaldees, The Sumerians*, etc. But Böhl, Albright and others favour a date nearer 1800. (ii) It would add two centuries to the period of Judges, quite agreeably with the internal clues of that book.

III

EARLY NATIONAL LIFE

(Occupation of promised land)

The material for this is furnished by the book of "*Judges*" or "Deliverers," and the period extends for perhaps two centuries, to end about 1100 B.C. (but see note pp. 166, 167). This would give space to include Samuel between Eli, the last of the Judges, and Saul, whose reign probably gave place to David's at about 1000 B.C.

Samuel was, in a sense, the last of the "judges" but combines with that function more than a suggestion of the new era of prophecy. We shall therefore treat him separately in another section.

This period would seem to have been one of wild disorder. There is the constant refrain: "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (cf. xvii. 6, xviii. 1, xix. 1, xxi. 25). There is no sign of a master-hand. It was every tribe for itself, grabbing, hanging on, trying to consolidate and settle, and, though the light of dawning

religious idealism is not entirely absent, there is a long way to go to nationhood, unity and the centrality of God.

Deuteronomy rules the structure of the book. We may safely say the very distinct framework is D, but that the compiler's material is primitive JE, a collection of legends of hard-fighting, unscrupulous, adventurer-patriots.

By compressing the legends into his rigid framework, D has squeezed a moral out of each, and it is the same moral each time. We travel in a vicious circle, with almost monotonous regularity. The people forget God, run after idols, fall into the hands of enemies, and have to be rescued, subdued and penitent, by deliverers who are called "judges." Each cycle is introduced by the same formula: "And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baalim. . . ." (e.g., ii. 11, iii. 7, etc.). It will suffice if I append a list of the chief oppressing enemies with deliverers attached. Some of the stories, like Samson, fail to fit adequately into the mould.

Mesopotamia	Othniel (iii. 9)
Moab	Ehud (iii. 12)
Canaan	Deborah and Barak (iv)
Midian	Gideon (vi–viii)
Shechem	Abimelech (ix–x)
Ammon	Jephthah (xi–xii)
Philistines	Samson (xiii–xvi)

But the cycle began to revolve slowly, at length the creaking clock began to run down. There arrived the time when the deliverer failed to deliver, when the Philistines came again and remained—remained for many a long day. And Eli failed to cope with them. The moralist, however, is not at a loss even when his rotating machinery clanks and clatters to a standstill. Eli's failure is due to the wickedness of Eli's sons! That was, doubtless, partially true. Still more may the truth lie in the fact that this sort of sporadic government was becoming hopeless. The day of "judges," be they paladins like Samson or assassins like Ehud, is done. Government needs to be steady, not spasmodic. And Samuel, the capable judge, possessing also the inspired sight of the seer, is not old before he realises that. The signs are plain to read for a duller man than he. There comes the crisis, the disastrous defeat at Aphek, the slaughter including Eli's sons, Eli's seizure at the tidings, and—worst of all—the Ark, symbol of divine sovereignty, captured. Something more than an occasional deliverer, something more even than a permanent official like himself is demanded. What is wanted is a King, a King by right, a national figurehead first to unite the nation, then to lead and consolidate it.

That was a real inspiration—whatever the priestly chroniclers may say about it afterwards—for it turned a set of individualist tribes into

a nation. Nothing but the monarchy would have achieved it. What Alfred the Great did for England, Saul and David did for Israel; whilst Solomon added some of the graces and arts of civilisation.

To the period of Judges possibly belongs the germ of the story of the book of *Ruth*, a pastoral idyll, which is a most refreshing change from tales of blood and savagery. Hints as to regulation of marriage with the surrounding heathen suggest the time of Ezra for the writing of the book in the form in which it reaches us. Therefore, it is to be regarded either as a late reshaping of an early story, or as a piece of writing in the retrospective vein of the modern historical novel. The opening words were possibly responsible for the action of the LXX and Vulgate in removing it from among the late books, where it lies in the Hebrew Bible, to the place it now occupies in ours. I have followed my declared plan in setting the book where its matter rather than its date of composition indicates its fitness to be placed. The opening words are: "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled. . . ." Goethe has spoken of it as "the loveliest little idyll that tradition has transmitted to us."

IV

PROPHETS AND KINGS

(Rise and Fall of Monarchy)

THE usher of this period, as we have said, is Samuel, who united in himself the expiring function of the judges with the dawning rôle of the prophet, at the same time yielding a foretaste of the priesthood. He might indeed conceivably have achieved the climax by crowning his own head instead of Saul's. But, like John the Baptist, he was great enough to anoint another head; though in this case, Samuel, by sheer character and force, remained the power beside the throne as long as he lived.

The books that cover this period of transition and the ensuing monarchy are 1 *and* 2 *Samuel*, 1 *and* 2 *Kings* (originally known as the Four Books of Kingdoms) and 1 *and* 2 *Chronicles*. The books are clearly composite, especially 1 and 2 Samuel. J, E, and D are the strands as before, chiefly J, the primitive narrative, and D, the narrative with an anti-monarchical bias. In Chronicles we see a writer with the P bias, exalting

all the kings who might be held to have obeyed the priesthood, and besmirching the rest. As Mr. Redlich has well said: "Chronicles is history obscured by a religious theory: it is an anachronism." [1]

1 and 2 Samuel would probably be put together in the latter part of the Exile, from the precious "books" taken by the captives to Babylon. These would comprise the monarchy story, M (of J or JE extraction), and the Court Memoirs, C (of King David's reign), very similar in character and dating almost simultaneously. 1 and 2 Kings had appeared at an earlier stage of the exile (probably about 560, emanating from the hand of the Deuteronomist school, and drawing for material on the Acts of Solomon and the annals of the twin-kingdoms, Israel and Judah). "Samuel" comes also from the hand of the didactic Deuteronomist school,[2] which, let us repeat, sought or attributed a God-ward aspect to every event and ran on an ecclesiastical bias; in a word—"the truth that fidelity to Jahweh is rewarded by national prosperity, and unfaithfulness punished by national misfortune." [3] This was the same method and school that put the "Judges" stories together. And there is a great deal to be said for the conception so long as it is derived from history *in the long run*, or

[1] Introduction to *Old Testament Study*, p. 64.

[2] There is little doubt that it endured a subsequent revision before reaching its present form.

[3] Dr. Skinner, 1 and 2 Kings (*Century Bible*, p. 15).

applied to an average human life *as a whole*. It is not true of a short period or of a single action. Goodness does not always *immediately* pay a nation, and certainly not an individual *all the time*. The Deuteronomist, then, stood for loyalty to God, the rejection of idols, and for an orderliness of religious government, but he is largely superior to the devastating operations of P, who alters facts to suit his theories. D will adjust rather than deliberately falsify. As Dr. Skinner says of D's lessons, they are "those naturally suggested by contemplation of the history as a whole and could therefore be conveyed by a straightforward narrative of the facts from which they are drawn."

To me, in view of our remarks about Israel being *chosen*, the intensely interesting fact is that its "undressed" history can *support and vindicate* that impression: also, that when it *is* doctored according to a political or ecclesiastic formula, as in Chronicles, or as under the pen of P in general, it *never looks like history*, being easily discernible for mere propaganda.

Chronicles is a compilation from Samuel and Kings, made about 300 B.C., combining perhaps some of *their* sources as named above, together with a variety of prophetical memoirs, since lost, such as the books of Nathan, Gad, Iddo and Shemaiah (1 Chron. xxix. 29; 2 Chron. xii. 15), also Jehu and Isaiah (Uzziah), etc. (2 Chron. xxvi. 22, xxxiii. 19).

An excellent illustration of the "block" method of composition is found when we notice how a section of Shemaiah is inserted without explanation or editorial cementing, being simply wedged into a running passage of Kings. (Cf. carefully 2 Chron. xii. 2 and 1 Kings xiv. 25. The Shemaiah memoirs stretch from verse 3 to verse 9a in the Chronicles passage; the rest, before and after, is direct from Kings.) [1]

Let us return, then, to the institution of Kingship, and the conflicting accounts thereof, which you will now be better able to assess at their respective values. Up to the latter part of the Exile people had been content with that primitive account which presented Samuel as a simple village seer, and recorded the Kingship less as a natural demand of the people than as a beneficent gift of God. The people are represented as crying, in a time of considerable unrest and upheaval, that God should deliver them out of their extremity. After the failure of all existing means towards law, order and security from foreign aggression Kingship was a thoroughly normal sequel.[2]

Later comes the Deuteronomist, with his theocratic ideal, obviously jealous for the name and place of God amongst His people, and honestly judging, as any Jew would, that something that

[1] Cf. Paterson Smyth, *Bible in the Making*, p. 93.

[2] It is a sufficiently natural development of policy, i.e., unification. In a similar crisis the Greeks realised that one ruler was better than many.

ended disastrously must have been itself primarily and essentially disastrous. That is the extent of his bias, and, as he is so very frank and open about it, and " prints " his primitive authorities so straightforwardly beside his own rendering, it is impossible to feel outraged. One simply regards the J as primitive untutored history, and the D as commentary to be weighed on its merits.

We take the institution of Kingship, then, not only as interesting in itself, but as a first-rate illustration of the intermingling of strands.

J is to be found in 1 Sam. ix–x. 16 and presents the picture of Samuel, a *village seer*, so little known that Saul learns of his existence only from a servant by his side who has heard gossip before, here in Ramah, about a clairvoyant (for that is what the gossip amounts to). Saul, anxious to find the strayed asses, thinks it may be worth while to test the seer, taking him a present of eightpence![1] Meantime, Samuel has been forewarned by God that he is to anoint this young man King of Israel, " for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me." When Saul arrived, the Lord said to Samuel: " Behold the man of whom I spake unto thee! " Saul is shy, so Samuel in homely fashion bids the cook bring the guest a special portion of meat to put him at ease.

[1] Even when the purchasing power is allowed for it still remains $\frac{1}{120}$ of the price of a slave—precisely the trifling present for a man in a very small way of business.

One notes three facts:

(*a*) Samuel is a comparatively *insignificant* village seer.

(*b*) Israel is in *great trouble* with the Philistines. The Lord gives this to Samuel as a reason for choosing a king. (Cf. ix. 16.)

(*c*) *God suggests* and justifies the Kingship, selects the man, and informs Samuel, who, in turn, enthusiastically carries out the scheme.

Now turn to the Deuteronomist (vii. viii. x. 17ff.)

(*a*) Samuel is the *big power* in the land, and has made his sons "judges over Israel" (viii). Saul could not have failed to be aware of such a "prime minister."

(*b*) Israel is having a time of *unparalleled peace* (vii).

(*c*) Both God and Samuel regard the suggestion of making a King as treason to the Almighty, not to mention gross ingratitude. God counsels Samuel to yield to it, however, and eventually Saul is sifted out by *drawing of lots*.

Of course, these two accounts are quite irreconcilable,[1] and yet the inferences are innocent and transparently drawn. God is clearly to be

[1] Similarly divergent accounts introduce David, now as a ruddy-faced shepherd-boy and now as an accomplished man-at-arms.

honoured, reasons the Deuteronomist, by the exaltation of his faithful servant Samuel. Emphasising the *peacefulness* of the period helps to make the ingratitude of the King-request more palpable and less excusable. The whole burden of the ultimate split and failure of the monarchy is thrust on the people by making them incontinently *demand* a King. God's servant is exonerated by His spirited protest, and God Himself must be dissociated from counselling anything that ended in failure, and yet at the same time acquitted of being thrust into it by *force majeure*. Hence, the picture of gentle reluctance and grieved yielding as of a father to a child's petulance.

Yet, when all this is said, there is the other side too. Primitive history may be honest in intention, but can still be ignorant and ill-informed. There may be a middle-ground that makes both accounts look like points of view of a single affair. On the spiritual side D commands respect almost always in his analysis of the probable emotions of God. There is something very beautiful and likely about the attitude of God in viii. 7–9. It is the attitude of a Father who yields to teach, not in petulance or pique, but in love, thus enduring comparison with Our Lord's revelation of God. Regard J as crude, roughly accurate history; take D as spiritual commentary; and you may get nearer the truth than either singly could have put you.

At least, under the monarchy, Israel attained unity until the great split took place after Solomon's death, the fruit of a young man's folly. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, throwing over old and wise counsellors for witless fools, produced a revolution. Dramatically the people cried:

> What portion have we in David?
> Neither have we inheritance in the Son of Jesse:
> To your tents O Israel;
> Now see to thine own house, David (1 Kings xii. 16.)

Jeroboam was made king of all save the tribe of Judah, and henceforward there are two kingdoms. To prevent his people from being drawn back under the influence of the house of David, as they would be if they went to Jerusalem to worship, Jeroboam sets up the old calf-worship at the antique shrines of Dan and Bethel (this act being known as "the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin").

So with varying fortunes the two kingdoms carved their history until Israel went down to Sargon of Assyria in 721. With the fall of the capital, Samaria, this kingdom was at an end for ever.

Not long afterwards Judah collapsed and became totally demoralised under the pressure of Sennacherib of Assyria. A moral revival,

however, followed by the destruction of Sennacherib's army under a terrible visitation, enabled Judah to hold on until a further revival occurred under Josiah (including the Deuteronomic reforms). A fatal political blunder then led to a disastrous defeat by Egypt in 608; and, in 597, Jerusalem fell before the onset of mighty Babylon. A batch of captives, including Ezekiel, was taken straightway to exile in Babylon. The puppet king, Zedekiah, was too weak to control the nationalist ambitions of his counsellors, so that Nebuchadnezzar came and destroyed Jerusalem finally in 586, taking almost the whole people captive to Babylon.

The monarchy had fallen, first, because, after Saul, David and Solomon, it was divided; secondly, because of internal strife and treachery; thirdly, through vacillating and foolish foreign policy. Had each, or, better, both kingdoms together, chosen one suzerain overlord, instead of making overtures first towards one, then towards another, a different story might have been written. Independence was probably impossible to territory placed as was theirs on the great trade and military routes between the big powers. This inclined to make them the cockpit of the East, as Belgium has been the cockpit of Europe. Isaiah and Jeremiah both realised this fact, and counselled stability in submission to one overlord instead of spasmodic displays of flashy but costly melodrama.

There are a number of prophetic books which deal with this period, and we must fit them into place before we leave it, including a word or so about their contents, authorship and date of composition.

First comes *Amos*, the herdman and sycamine dresser. He disclaims the honour of the prophetic title, but, nevertheless, his claim to it is manifest. He was his own biographer, which is not true of all the prophets whose words are enshrined in books of the same name. In the reign of Jeroboam II (782–743), when the luxury and callousness of the rich called loudly to heaven, appeared this desert shepherd with the nomad's hatred of buildings and an equal scorn of luxury. In him the oppressed poor found a doughty champion. In his passion for righteousness he enforces on nationalist bigots a new interpretation of their exalted position. Even as Paul in the Epistle to the Romans (ix) shows that Israel was indeed elect, but to service not to selfishness, so Amos, most dramatically (iii. 2): "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore"—(What? not luxurious ease and privilege, but)—"*therefore* I will visit upon you all your iniquities." (cf. Jer. xviii.)

Probably "Amos" was put into writing as early as 750 B.C.

Close after him came *Hosea*, preaching the loving kindness of God, where Amos had preached the righteousness. He would date somewhere

after 750, in the same reign, though he outlives it to record the anarchy that followed. Not unlike J in his intimate conception and in his use of the same name for Jahweh, he is yet free from J's crudeness. He would have Israel regard life and religion as a marriage between her and God, whose tenderness he paints from the most poignant domestic circumstances of his own life, reproaching the people for their unfaithfulness to such a God. As Amos inspired Isaiah, so Hosea inspired Jeremiah, and not only that, but left his beautiful conception of God as a legacy to the whole Deutronomist school.

About 740 appears *Isaiah* (author of Isaiah 1–xxxix), a man who must rank closely with Jeremiah for the title of the greatest prophet. The choice alternates as you lean to a commanding figure in political and social affairs or to the intimate mystic in revelation of personal religion. In his political rôle Isaiah was at times unpopular, as was Jeremiah when his duty led him along the way of statecraft. Clearly it could not be a popular thing for Isaiah to counsel submission to Assyria. Chiefly, however, he was the prophet of the intense holiness and majesty of God. There is much history of the times in his book (especially of Hezekiah's reign), setting forth the prophet's views on Assyrian and Egyptian policies. He made a great stand against idolatry and oppression.

The rest of the large book is not his.

Chapters xl–lv would date about 538, and

they contain consolation for the exiles. This section glows with the glory of a great world-hope, and is famous for its superb conception of the Suffering Servant in which many have seen a foreshadowing of the Perfect Man of Sorrows.

Chapters lvi-lxvi would be later still (about 450), for they concern themselves with the reconstituted religion and the rebuilt Temple.

Of *Jeremiah* one would say at once that his work was inspired by the book of the law found in Josiah's reign, though he was too essentially spiritual to lay the stress it did on the central Temple at Jerusalem. Politically, as we have said, he was unhappily placed. Wisdom counselled submission to Babylon, a course which appeared unpatriotic. His life held much suffering, disappointment and failure. We read with a start the familiar words he writes of himself, "a lamb that is led to the slaughter" (xi. 19), and remember that he was among the few of whom the person and ways of Jesus reminded discerning people (Matt. xvi. 14), and that he was probably the figure which suggested that outstanding chapter liii of the Second-Isaiah. Especially true of him, and not of Christ, were certain words in that chapter ("He hath no form nor comeliness . . . no beauty that we should desire him"). Yet so wonderful an insight into perfect manhood do the words betray that they nearly describe Christ also. As Professor Wheeler Robinson says: "In

him as never before, religion became individual, spiritual, intimate, warm with the life-blood of a loving and sympathetic heart."[1] His whole nature and circumstances, however, tended to make him a lonely, sad, and misunderstood man.

Yet, perhaps, he was the greatest of the prophets.

When the fall of Jerusalem occurred he remained behind with the remnant that stayed amid the desolation, and he served still, cherishing the flame of spiritual religion for posterity, whilst Ezekiel and his priestly school laboured on the exaltation of the Temple and the priestly code.

It is not possible to pass these four names by without noting that they all stood firm against the conception that religion was summed up in sacrifice and external ceremonies. Their words and attitude go far to show that they denied sacrifice a place in true religion at all. Proof texts are tyrannical, but if they fairly illustrate a general characteristic they are permissible.[2]

[1] Peake's *Commentary*, p. 475.

[2] Here are four that occur quickly to the mind:

Amos (v. 21f.): "I hate, I despise your feasts . . . your burnt offerings and meal offerings I will not accept them. . . . Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness . . .?"

Hosea (vi. 6): "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice: and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."

Isaiah (i. 11f.): To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?—I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he-goats. Your new moons and appointed feasts my soul hateth. Wash you, make you clean—cease to do evil."

Jeremiah (vii. 22): "I spake not to your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them forth out of Egypt

Already the scene is set for the great struggle between prophet and priest, inner spiritual religion against outer ceremonial and sacrificial observance.

If we had to sum up the religious history of the Jews under a single heading it would be as a fight against the everlasting encroachment of heathen superstitions.

You see it first as the fight of the comparatively pure faith in Jahweh to keep itself free from the

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concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them saying: Hearken unto my voice." (Also vi. 20).

As illustration that these four by no means stood alone in this matter, one might add that magnificent passage which Prof. R. Moulton named as the greatest passage in the Old Testament. It is in Second-Micah (Post-exilic. See page 187).

Micah vi. 6-8: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" He suggests-burnt offerings? calves? rams? rivers of oil? his own firstborn?—Well, then, what does the Lord require? "To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

The anti-sacrificial vision, in fact, is recorded throughout the Old Testament literature. Cf. also 1 Sam. xv (a seventh century pre-Deuteronomic passage): "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Prov. xxi. 3: "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice."

Psalm li. 7: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit . . ."

Reasoning, anguish, appeal, agony of these prophet-seers come all in vain to a priesthood debauched in blood, and a people fed fat on cheap vicariousness. The people cannot see that practices which might be suitable for the "Queen of Heaven" and other heathen deities are not fit for the worship of Jahweh. Owing, however, to a malign perverseness in Jewish history, it is not until the preaching of Christ and Paul that we see the triumph of the spiritual over the ceremonial and sacrificial. Meantime in this Old Testament story we see the elaboration of a system of worship, etc., into a burden that finally crushed the people and blinded them to their Lord's appearance.

abominations of the Canaanites and their descendants. "Judges" gave an excellent illustration of how the conflict of early days appeared to the seventh-century writer. But you see it again when Israel has crushed the last of the old enemies. In their death they live still. You see the conflict set now between prophets and priests. But it is the same fight, the struggle for pure spiritual religion against sacrificial observances, which were, after all, largely adaptations of heathen ceremonies, and, if they were not, had long lost any valid spiritual significance.

The faith in Jahweh as the God of the whole world had come safely through the various stages of growth, from superstition to monolatry or henotheism (when Jahweh was viewed as one God among many, though the greatest, and held sway only in His own country; so that Naaman, to worship Him in Syria, must take with him a load of Israelitish soil). From monolatry, too, it had travelled finally on to monotheism (i.e., that there is but one God for the whole world). But the sacrifice passage was never safely navigated. How much of the final wreck of Jewish fortunes may be traced to the besetting curse of sacrifice, which Jesus swept from the Temple, quoting Hosea, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice"! But the Jews *desired sacrifice and not Him!* It was the great vested interest of the priests. Ezekiel in some measure, and the Priestly school in general, evolved it in the Exile. Ezekiel,

however, was by no means personally unspiritual. After the Exile, as before, the prophets wage ever a losing fight, but a heroic one. The day is to come when the Jews will make a sacrifice of their God Himself in human flesh, and the High Priest will opine cynically that it is expedient that one man die for the people! That after all is the evil menace of sacrifice. It is always *somebody else*. Not only does it make religion an unreal and brutal pageantry, but it shifts the responsibility, it shifts the guilt, it shifts the moral consequences, it shifts sin by a subterfuge. It is always, "Somebody else." Always the scapegoat. All the time the prophets strove to make religion personal, responsible, a thing without mediators and priests, intimate and direct. Like Christ they would have had the Temple a House of Prayer. They failed, but their record stands for us.

There are other names that fall within this period, lesser ones, but not to be missed.

First, *Micah*, about 700, in Hezekiah's reign (as Jer. xxvi. 18f. confirms). Probably only chapters i-iii belong to him, the rest being added after the exile, possibly to lighten Micah's gloom with a ray of hope and brightness. He is the prophet of the poor, and a lineal descendant in spirit of Amos.

There was *Zephaniah*, too, who like Jeremiah linked the Scythian with the notion of an avenger of Jahweh's outraged pride against His people. He gives an unrelieved picture of the sordidness

of outlook before the discovery of the Deuteronomic roll in the Temple in 621, and is, in fact, another prophet of gloom and doom. Moreover, his royal ancestry (he was related to Hezekiah) does not save him from a dull and ponderous style. As brilliant as his contemporary was heavy, stands *Nahum*, who flourished about the time of Josiah's fatal blundering defiance of Egypt which was expiated in the royal blood shed at Megiddo, 608. Nahum makes religion a human thing.

Then there was the all but unknown *Obadiah*, with his little relic of prophecy, chiefly exercised about the Edomites, who sold their sword to Babylon when their distant kinsmen were facing doom in Jerusalem in 586. The writing is probably fifth-century, but the matter of it falls partly into our present period. This brings us to the study of the Exile and its outstanding figure—Ezekiel.

V

PROPHETS AND PRIESTS

(Exile)

THE monarchy is irretrievably ruined and done with. The Priestly party, under the inspiration of Ezekiel, is now busy making sure that a repatriated Israel shall be safe for theocracy, i.e., that there shall never be any more kings to compete with the Lordship of Jahweh—as administered by His priests. Their rivalry with the prophets is as good as over. All religion is being pressed into an ecclesiastical mould, shaped in the form of a central Temple. Priests are to be mediators, and sacrifices and ceremonies are to be emblems, as though by every means to shroud the spiritual realities from the people. The Holy of Holies, partitioned from the Holy Place, is entered by priests alone. Jeremiah, the man who had dared to speak of central sanctuaries, even of the Ark, as having no final place in true religion, is left behind with the handful of Jews in Jerusalem. Even the Deuteronomist

school is in tune with the rising Priestly school to the extent of being enraptured with the central shrine. There is apparently no one in Babylon with Jeremiah's instinct for unfettered spiritual religion. Jeremiah, living nearly seven hundred years before Christ, and Jeremiah alone, might conceivably have uttered sincerely those words of Jesus: "The hour cometh when neither in this mountain (Mt. Gerizim, Samaria) nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and truth." (John iv. 21-23.)

Jeremiah's passionate cry for individual religion, illumined and nourished by the grace of God, is to wait six hundred years for its response. Now is the victory of the priest over the prophet. The fact that Ezekiel began as a mixture of both did not help matters. The priest Ezekiel is victorious over the prophet Jeremiah: ceremonial and corporate religion triumphs over individual and spiritual. That is not to say that beautiful lives and intimate mystics will not persist, but the national trend is set, and the ceremonial mould cast.

The only prophet who lifts up his voice in the exile is *Habakkuk*,[1] querulous and pessimistic (about 550). Professor G. A. Smith has called him "The prophet as sceptic." He broods on

[1] Except Second-Isaiah, referred to above. It is possible Habakkuk may be slightly before the Exile.

Babylon's rôle as the minister of God's justice. Yet there is no proof that the people were badly treated. The freedom accorded to men like Ezekiel to pursue their religious labours is symptomatic of the tolerance of the conqueror.

Ezekiel, however, as we have hinted, was a prophet only in a degree subordinate to his priestship. The quality served to give him the fire and vision necessary to elaborate a successful scheme of priesthood. He shows all a prophet's denunciatory power in his indictment of his people's sin, all a prophet's hope in his announcement of their restoration, something of a poet's imagination in his picture of the valley of dry bones (xxxvii), of Tyre, going down like some galleon at sea (xxvii), of the ghostly executioners at work in Temple courts heaped with slain (ix), and of that weirdly rising tide (xlvii); but all a priest's obsession with ritual, ceremony and priestcraft, when he makes of the things that are eternal and unseen matter of elaborate regulation and human hierarchy.

VI

THEOCRACY OR DOMINATION BY PRIESTS

(After the Exile)

This period opens with the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus of Persia in 538, and the almost immediate repatriation of the Jews. The Persian would have much in common with the Jew, more than with the conquered Chaldean (Babylonian). For one thing, the Persian hated idols as fervently as the Jew. The period extends as far as the end of Nehemiah's work for the returned exiles, and then loses itself in the outer fringe of that dark time which heralded the coming of Christ.

First returned the party under Zerubbabel and Jeshua with the flourish of the royal edict ringing in their ears (Ezra i. 2,3). These two were governor and priest respectively (see Zech. iii). An altar was set up, the foundations of the Temple were laid (Ezra iii. 12). Then, in spite of Samaritan[1] opposition, the Temple was

[1] The Samaritans were no longer a pure race. When Israel fell, Assyria carried through the usual policy of "quartering"

completed in 516, after sympathetic encouragement from Darius. To this first period of return belongs the work of the prophets *Haggai* and *Zechariah*, whose preaching, as transmitted, probably by disciples, is our record for this first return and its achievements. Their view of Persia leans rather to that of *Esther*, another book laid in this period, in that it suggests Persia as tyrant rather than deliverer. Esther, a Jewish queen married to a Persian tyrant, had to intercede with her husband Ahasuerus (probably to be identified with Artaxerxes, 465–425)[1] for the deliverance of the Jews whose massacre Haman was instigating. Along with Zechariah, who apparently wrote his own prophetic memoirs, Haggai urged on the work of rebuilding the Temple. The first eight chapters only of Zechariah, consisting mainly of "visions," are by the hand of the prophet, the rest being later (possibly as late as the second century B.C.).

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the people. It was effective. Three quarters of the population of Israel being removed, the country could be filled with three quotas of different subject nationalities, preferably those who did not know one another's languages. We find that some in this case came from Hamath, others from Babylon, and some from Eastern dependencies of the Assyrian Empire. There could be no concerted rebellion for twenty years! Intermarriage of course set in, and from the priest-standpoint of the clannish Jew they were for ever debased. Their religion was perverted, too, by crude heathen customs and idolatries. Hence, then, their overtures towards the returned Jews were cold-shouldered, and, in natural chargin, the Samaritans made themselves as much of a nuisance as possible. Hence the feud, persisting right on to our Lord's day.

[1] Some identify him with Xerxes, 485–465.

For the remainder of this period we depend on *Ezra-Nehemiah* (originally one book). These memoirs supply us with an account of Ezra's return with a party in 458,[1] and the stern handling of the intermarriage question. They deal also with the commencement of the walls under manifold opposition. They give us, too, the return under Nehemiah in 444, and the building of the walls in fifty-two days of herculean labour under attack from Sanballat, Tobiah and heterogeneous malcontents. There follows Ezra's reading of The Law. Nehemiah's commission accomplished, he returns to his master, Artaxerxes, but is allowed to come back again with still more exiles in 432.

The book was compiled by the same hand as Chronicles and at about the same date, the original memoirs, etc., being welded together into their present form about 300 B.C.

Other books briefly to be noted as belonging to the Ezra-Nehemiah period are *Malachi*, *Job*, *Psalms*, possibly *Proverbs* and *Lamentations*.

Malachi is an anonymous work which might from its subject-matter of tithes and mixed marriages fall anywhere in the Ezra-Nehemiah period, in fact almost any time after 516, the date of the completion of the Temple.

Job is a drama built of prose and poetry round

[1] Some scholars prefer to date Ezra after Nehemiah, i.e. C. 400 B.C. taking the Artaxerxes of Ez: vii, 7, to be Mnemon (404–358) rather than Longimanus (464–424). The date of Tehohanan (Ez. x. 6.)—and perhaps the Aswan papyri—lends some support. The whole matter, however, is still at the stage of tentative theory. (See Lofthouse: *Israel after the Exile*, pp. 194–225.)

the theme of human suffering, and reveals the utter failure of experience to confirm the prevailing theory that sin was always the cause of it.[1] The prose portion, a kind of saga, was probably exilic; the poetry and compilation would more likely be of the fifth century. The poet has used the folk-story of a good man fallen on misfortune as a casket for his poetry and to carry his philosophy on the insoluble problem of evil and pain. He preaches a lofty faith, and delineates the true nobility of the man who is content to bow his head to the storm that he cannot understand, until the light shall come.

The *Psalms* one scarcely likes to dismiss in a sentence or so, but our purpose here is not to estimate their value. They are scarcely likely to be Davidic to any extent, or even pre-exilic, and seem chiefly to belong to the period of the rebuilt Temple. They are assigned to David under the same notion of patriotic ascription as that which attributes the Proverbs to Solomon and the Law to Moses.

Proverbs, that collection of pointed and pungent aphorisms, dates from 400 onwards to the Syrian period.

Lamentations is not easy to place. It is manifestly inspired by a great disaster, but whether the catastrophe caused by Nebuchadnezzar (586), Antiochus Epiphanes (170) or Pompey (63) is uncertain, opinion leaning rather to the first, whilst the last would perhaps gain second vote.

[1] Compare, even in our Lord's time: "Did this man sin or his parents that he was born blind?" (John ix. 2f.)

VII

DARK TIME

(Leading to Impact of Greek on Jew)

We come now to the dark period when Biblical historians fail us completely, and no others fill the gap for two hundred and fifty years. At that point certain apocryphal histories are at our disposal. The only literature we can command, as we leave the Ezra-Nehemiah community, with its elaborate priestly government, and plunge into the darkness which obtains almost to 160, is comprised in *Joel* and *Ecclesiastes*, *Jonah* and *Daniel*, with the *Song of Songs*.

Of these, *Joel* provides us with a first-class account of a locust invasion, described as though it were the onset of a vast human army. It may have dated anywhere in the early part of the dark centuries, and probably came from the hand of a priest. At any rate, the writer's attention is caught by the incident because, in particular, it put the daily sacrifices out of action owing to the untimely death of sacrificial animals, whose means

of sustenance had been destroyed—a useful confirmatory hint that sacrifice was continuing to occupy a central position in the worship of the restored community.

Of *Ecclesiastes*, which may be referred to the beginning of the second century B.C.—a date which leaves enough time for it to get known before the stabilisation of the canon (Synod of Jamnia, *c.* A.D. 90)—it is sufficient to indicate that it was known to Jesus Ben Sirach, the writer of the closely parallel work, *Ecclesiasticus* (132 B.C.). Ecclesiastes is possibly the work of a physician (cf. xii. 3-7). It is difficult to see why one book should have entered the canon without the other. Both of them, however, serve to illustrate the need for some influx of the divine, such as was provided by the Incarnation of the Son of God. All the wheels of life seem to have run down, for the books both breathe a culture without faith, and a poetry without hope. Indeed, an almost cynical despair permeates them beneath the literary polish.

Of the *Song of Songs* it should be mentioned, in passing, that it could have been included in the canon only because it was esteemed old (i.e., a work of Solomon's) or because it was held to be an allegory portraying the church. As both these ideas are now discredited, and it stands as a love lyric of possibly about 250 B.C., it would seem to have attained more than its due.

The other two books are intensely valuable as giving the key to spiritual as distinct from social movements within what we have called the period of darkness. It may be said without any exaggeration that, in importance for spiritual values, they are second to no books in the Old Testament.

Jonah, about 300 B.C., sounds the trumpet-call to the sense of mission, now sadly submerged, but which was the foundation of the people's election and training. Lost in the round of sacrifices and self-centring national piety, they needed badly to be summoned back to their missionary vocation. Jonah, an obscure prophet (2 Kings xiv. 25), is chosen by the unknown author to represent Israel, as King Arthur carries the moral legends of Spenser and Tennyson; Nineveh stands for the world; and the whale is Nebuchadnezzar (in Jer. li. 34, 44, Nebuchadnezzar appears as the swallowing "dragon"); the three days' envelopment representing the sixty years' captivity in Babylon. The Jews put the book among their prophecies, not their histories; it tells of a three-day mission to a city of perhaps a million inhabitants (Jonah iv. 11), a mission crowned with complete success, a world-shaking event which would have found some mention either in national records or, at least, in Jonah's biography, had it really occurred in fact. But it is more than bare history; it is rich truth.

On the ship, as he runs from his duty, Jonah

has been made to perceive what excellent fellows these "heathen" are, and their devotion puts him to shame. There follows the storm, Jonah's confession, his committal to the waves where the great fish engulfs him. That is the history of Judah, cries, in effect, the writer of the epic, but Judah has returned not a whit the better. She loves the destruction of the world rather than its salvation, and counts petty comforts (such as the shelter afforded by the gourd) as on a level of importance with world-salvation, using the very same words to express her pique in each case.

This is the last recorded voice, before Christ, calling the people to their real mission in life. Alas! like Him who later spoke of the "sign of Jonah," the writer failed.[1]

Daniel, once considered a much older book, has now found its place as the *latest* book of the Old Testament, a specimen of apocalyptic writing, but famous for a much more vivid reason than that, viz., for showing the sudden attainment of the belief in personal immortality. It is matter for never-ceasing wonder that a people to whom the world owes so much of its spiritual enlightenment should have failed earlier to perceive that the necessary corollary of the eternal concern

[1] Matt. xii. 38, where the "sign of Jonah" either may mean that, like Jonah, Christ has come preaching (but, unlike him, has not found acceptance), or refers to the *book* of Jonah which is in itself the supreme warning to the stony heart of Israel. No other sign of what follows dereliction of duty or blindness to mission should be needed.

of an immortal God for His people was their own immortality. It is, perhaps, not quite so surprising when one recollects that they esteemed the *nation* as the unit, holding *its* immortality as the one assured—oddly enough, the exact reverse of the truth that history has disclosed.

In the creed of almost every race you will find some kind of belief in everlasting life, however crude. Primitives like the Bantu, Baperi and Maori, all have their queer heavens. The Egyptian has his Book of the Dead, the Babylonian a demon-ridden future abode, the Persian a more spiritual state. But more shadowy than all was the Hebrew Sheol. Indeed, it could not be viewed as immortality at all. Greece had won much further than Israel here. Not only had the epic of Homer toyed with the fancy, but philosophy had founded the reasonableness of the idea.[1]

Then in 170 came the impact of Greece upon Israel. True, Syria presented a debased Greek currency, but nevertheless it *was* Hellenism that beat in upon the bastioned isolation of the Chosen People, and, in the resultant clash of arms, was flashed the spark of the immortal hope. That flash "Daniel" records. Up till then? just a dull pedestrian philosophy.

[1] Jowett: *Dial. of Plato.* If the ideas of men are eternal their souls are eternal—and in the Republic he supports his hope by the remarkable argument that if the soul survives the attack made upon it by its own diseases, those of cowardice, injustice, intemperance and folly, much more may its vitality be proof against the things which wear out the body.

In placing " Daniel " thus late, i.e., 167-165 (as the work of an unknown prophet preaching in the Maccabean wars), we do not neglect the possibility that it incorporates stories of Daniel (the heroic, if legendary, figure of the Babylon captivity) which may date considerably earlier. The book is well written, and the consideration of the two periods is graphically bridged in this poetic fantasy by the introduction of the great statue representing the intervening empires; Babylonian (gold), Medic (silver), Persian (brass), Greek (iron), Syrian (Seleucids) and Egyptian (Ptolemies) together representing the feet of mingled iron and clay.

The accuracy and fullness with which the book deals with the Maccabean period shows that this constitutes the writer's chief interest, i.e., his own time. The " I, Daniel " conveys no more proof of Babylonic date than a similar remark in Ecclesiastes indicates Solomon, or in the Law Moses, or in the Psalms David. As we have pointed out, Hebrew literary methods were of the loosest according to our standards. Moreover, the traditional view involves a number of difficulties which it cannot explain away.

For illustration of the pedestrian philosophy we spoke of as being the vogue in 180 B.C., glance at Ben Sirach, writer of Ecclesiasticus,[1] a

[1] The Hebrew work dates about 180 B.C., but the Greek translation, which is our authority, about 130; only fragments of the Hebrew version survive.

steady-going proverbial moralist, delineator of the virtues, foibles and eccentricities of family life, who strikes the monotonous note of propriety, prudence and respectability. As reward for a good life he promised you something as prosaic as he had pictured the race of life itself. Whilst you mouldered in the grave you were to be talked of with respect by the old cronies in the Gate (equivalent to market-place). If you misbehaved, you were to be remembered with a sad wag of the head!

No full-blooded man could be greatly influenced by that, any more than by the moralisings of which the book is full (cf. iv. 7, xxxi. 11, etc.). For all the inequalities of life his single panacea is, "Look at the End," meaning: "Look at what they will say of you in the Gate. That will right the iniquity of a life which has failed adequately to reward virtue or punish vice!"

In upon this dull second-century world burst Hellenism, *via* Syria, Hellenism with its show of delights for a cramped, stifled Jewish youth, glittering pomps like gymnasium, circus, bath and hippodrome. As in a flash the two parties in Judæa crystallised: on the one hand the sons of Zadok, the priestly and court party,[1] i.e., the

[1] The words "court party" may occasion surprise in what was last seen as a theocratic nation. In Ecclesiasticus you still find a picture of Simeon the Righteous, as religious and political head of the community. What had happened was this. In 198 Antiochus the Great had finally settled the Seleucid wars in which Palestine and other provinces were bandied about as spoils for the victor, and Jerusalem positively welcomed him

Sadducees; on the other, the Hasidim, or purist lovers of the law, known later as the Pharisees. Eventually, after some preliminary trouble, Antiochus Epiphanes succeeded to the throne of his uncle, Antiochus the Great. He is a remarkable figure, as histrionic in pose as the German ex-Kaiser. A man of blazing imagination and unbalanced judgment, he was a devotee, almost a debauchee, of the superficial Hellenism which had filtered through into his experience. Given an idea, he would follow it through blood and chaos, were it frolic or vendetta, to see himself, like Nero, triumphant at the end, in a blaze of limelight. A flaneur, poseur, drunkard, liar, madman—flooded with hectic inspirations, he held the stage in 175 B.C. The full title he arrogated to himself was Theos Epiphanes (God made manifest); and nicknames, self-imposed or otherwise, often tell more than a whole essay. The shallow Hellenist cult spread like a plague over Judæa, whose young men stalked the streets in Greek dress, chlamys and broad-brimmed hat to the horror of the Pharisee party, and under the leisurely indulgence of the Sadducees who subserviently kept in favour with Antiochus.

But trouble speedily brewed under such superintendence. First he robbed the Temple,

who, in Daniel's words, "stood in the land of glory with destruction in his hand" (xi. 14). Josephus says that Jerusalem received the Conqueror with a festal procession and that in return she received major privileges for temple and nation. Thus was introduced the new factor that worked this catalysis.

then had a mad whim to extinguish its religion. You find the history of what followed in the Apocrypha, viz., in the books of *Maccabees;* but the message of hope that was to inspire the *first martyrs* of the Jewish faith came from "Daniel." Length of days was being inexplicably denied to the righteous—when suddenly "Daniel's" cry cleaves the gloom: "Many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt, etc."[1] The effect of such a clarion revelation was electric. "Through the grim conflict with torture and death the elect people was being led to a new vision. The martyr could now go down to the gulf of darkness with a transcendent prospect upon the farther side."[2]

With the final mad act of Antiochus in destroying sacred books, and demanding idolatry and emperor-worship, the mask of so-called Hellenism was finally off. "Its 'broad-minded' culture was at heart false and really godless. With all that it had to offer in the way of material enlargement, its very atmosphere was filled with the atmosphere of moral death and corruption."[3] At first, Jews were slaughtered unresisting by foes who cunningly chose the sabbath for their attack. Then, one day, aged Mattathias astonished them, friends and foes, by striking down on the sabbath

[1] Dan. xi. 2. 3.

[2] Bevan: *Jerusalem under the High Priests*, p. 87. Where also see an excellent survey of the whole period.

[3] Riggs: *History of the Jewish People*, p. 23.

the Syrian commissioner at Modin, and Judas Maccabeus, with his fellows, broke loose from all restraint. The backbone of the heroic resistance was the Pharisee party, devoted lovers of the Law, whose descendants have gone down to history as the victims of the defects of their very virtues. Scrupulosity is a distorted excess of conscience, and we see the Pharisees in our Lord's time, like some pitiful victims of senile decay, peddling and pottering with paltry details of elaborate regulations, until the big facts of the holy law are squeezed out of their notice by sheer exclusion.[1] The Pharisees fell victims to dull and muddled thinking. They lost sight of the forest amid their pruning of its twigs. The Sadducees on the other hand reaped the reward of all indulgent time-servers and worldly-minded courtiers. They encountered speedily the " shame and everlasting contempt " foretold for such people by Daniel. Thus, the Pharisees, who had made the bold break away from the tyranny of single Temple and central shrine, and had decentralised religion once again by instituting preaching houses called synagogues, nevertheless missed the Messiah when He came because of

[1] Muirhead : *Times of Christ*, p. 89f. depicts them quarrelling as to whether a knot might be tied on the sabbath or a lamp extinguished. When the disciples were reprimanded for their action during a sabbath walk in the cornfields, during which they rubbed corn in their hands, it was because they were reaping and threshing. Similarly to slouch a foot was to be guilty of ploughing. Nor was it legitimate to eat an egg laid on the sabbath.

the peddling busyness and unimaginative prejudices which ever breed in dull and self-satisfied minds. The Sadducees, the other party, missed him through being immersed in the blood-bath of official sacrifices; and, through essential disloyalty in the Maccabean crisis, their eyes were so blinded that they never believed either in the resurrection foreshadowed by "Daniel,"[1] or in Him Who is both the Resurrection and the Life.

The catastrophe of the Cross consummates the tragedy of Jewish national history, although it was not until A.D. 70 that the Romans endorsed the epilogue in Jewish blood.

[1] It should be stated that there is a growing tendency to deny the absence of immortality in Hebrew thought previous to Daniel, arguing that its saturation with Egyptian influences for so many centuries must have induced a positive philosophy. This school accounts for the negative attitude of the Old Testament on the subject as follows:—

(i) Hebrew religion was faced with constant conflict against necromancy and worship of the dead.

(ii) Emphasis was to be concentrated upon this world rather than the next, and it was more important to stress that God was invading this one than that man might one day invade the other.

PART III

HOW DID THE BOOKS COME TO BE COLLECTED AND SELECTED?— AND WHY?

(*A*)

THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

We are faced here with the twofold question: Why were some books chosen as though of a higher standard, and on what grounds were the others rejected? Luke's introduction to his gospel shows that, even at the time of his writing, "many" had taken in hand to write about Christ, and therefore, by the time the notion of a canon (lit., "carpenter's rule," therefore "standard") suggested itself, there was quite a considerable literature. No one ever sat down, nor any council of men, and *decided* which books were to go into the canon. The books, in a very real sense, decided the matter themselves, not in quite so dramatic a fashion as by leaping on the altar, but by their intrinsic merits.

What men *did* do towards assisting this operation, without realising the fact, was to give certain writings the honour of being read in churches during sermon time. As Justin Martyr says, "The memoirs of the Apostles . . . are read as time allows." The criterion that decided

this honour was *apostolic authorship*, and, later on, this was widened, in the case of Mark's and Luke's gospels, to include *disciples of apostles*. Apart from this secondary position accorded to the Christian books, there was no thought of forming a canon to supplement the existing Old Testament canon. Those Hebrew books formed the real scriptures inasmuch as they led up to and prophesied the Christ. It was, therefore, in all innocence, so to speak, that this veiled step towards canonising fresh books was taken, but, of course, it led quite easily on to the next stage. For after a while books that were always being read and referred to became the touchstone in controversial matters, and thus, *ipso facto*, a canon. As Dr. Murray says: "The 'canon' is the list of books recognised as authoritative on points of Christian doctrine."[1]

This public reading both of epistles and gospels told largely in rendering the writings unique, although for a time, apparently, letters from others than apostles were read, e.g., Bishop Dionysius of Corinth says: "We have been reading in Church to-day Clement's Epistle," i.e., the Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians. This same Clement had, according to Irenæus, "seen the blessed Apostles and conversed with them," and had their preaching "still sounding in his ears." But the "extra" letters seem gradually to have dropped behind

[1] Peake's *Commentary*, p. 594.

in the race, until, in the year A.D. 100, the list has almost crystallised into stability. Polycarp and Ignatius are flourishing at about that date (A.D. 115), and their testimony, with Clement's, goes to show the progress of this "automatic" process. These three men in their writings show familiarity with all the New Testament books except 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, James, Philemon and Revelation; but the remark of Ignatius reveals that, though reverenced, the books are not yet regarded as Scripture. He is disposed to deny any exaggerated claims of authority for these writings: "If we heard some say they would believe in the gospel only as they found it in the records, to people of that kind I say, 'My authentic records are Jesus Christ, His Cross and His resurrection.'"

But that of the gospels four and no more had become authoritative by the end of the second century cannot be doubted. Whereas Justin Martyr, in A.D. 140, refers to the "Memoirs of the Apostles" being read "as time allows," thus showing the part taken by the "gospels" in public worship, Tatian less than a quarter of a century later had issued his Diatessaron or Harmony of the *four* existing gospels, thus showing that they occupied a unique position, and that all such tentative and spurious gospels as that of "Peter" and the "Gospel according to the Egyptians," etc., had fallen behind. By A.D.

200, Irenæus has referred to the four as parallel to the four winds of heaven, as immutably four, and no more, as the cardinal points! So completely have the others fallen away, through studied neglect, that they have sunk, in the main, without trace. A contrast to this is the case of the Old Testament Apocryphal books, which, through being bound up with the Old Testament in so many Bibles, preserved not only their lives but even a kind of secondary authority, not merely within the Roman Church, but generally, for antiquarian and historical purposes.

Evidence could be multiplied to show the recognition accorded to our New Testament books: Basilides referring to John, Marcion to Luke; and the possibly spurious epistle of "Barnabas" quoting verbatim from Matthew xxii. 14. This last quotation is particularly notable for its telling introduction, i.e., *As it is written*, which thus illustrates that the books, or at any rate the gospels, as containing actual words and deeds of Christ, now tend to rank with the Old Testament Canon as *Scripture*.

Meantime the Epistles are likewise progressing towards a similar recognition. Polycarp quotes Eph. iv. 26 as "in scriptures." Dr. Murray thinks that a collection of Pauline Epistles must have been in circulation at this time, so familiar do these writers show them-

selves with the letters. From being read in "Church"[1] they came to be quoted in controversy. Let us repeat that, in the case of Paul's letters, all are "vouched for" by Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp, except the little letter to Philemon. For the rest of the books, Acts was established, as also 1 Peter and 1 John, whilst alongside them lived for a time the letters of Clement and "Barnabas" and the "Shepherd" of Hermas, the former two probably because their authors or reputed authors were at least companions, if not actual disciples, of apostles. All claims on the part of books to be of such origin were scrupulously and closely tested: otherwise, as Professor Lofthouse points out, difficulties would have arisen in conflicts with heretics. Both sides must be prepared to acknowledge a book's validity before it can be quoted with effect. And the Church guarded the entrance with manifest care.[2] It is interesting to notice, therefore, that Marcion, a famous early heretic, was prepared to nominate as authoritative a list of the apostolic writings. That amounts to a recognition of certain New Testament scriptures as a canon or standard by heretics as well as the orthodox.

[1] Sometimes providing food difficult to masticate! (cf. 2 Peter iii. 15, 16: "Even as our beloved brother Paul also . . . wrote . . . some things hard to be understood.")

[2] *The Bible: Its Origin and Authority*, p. 52. "An instructive example is found in the so-called Gospel of Peter, discovered by Serapion in use at Rhossus about 200 A.D., and discountenanced by him. A portion of it was brought to light in 1892."

With the Muratorian Fragment about A.D. 180 we reach something like definition.[1] This is a Latin translation of a Greek writing attributed to Hippolytus. Unfortunately it is mutilated; but by its reference to Luke's and John's gospels as "third" and "fourth" we may almost certainly assume the two missing ones to be Matthew and Mark. In the fifth place comes the Acts.

Further, the thirteen Pauline Epistles are included, and it faintly acknowledges the doubtful claims of the later epistles of John with Jude and Revelation, still more doubtfully the Apocalypse of Peter.

The next milestone is a triple one (Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian) and closes the second century with all the books established, save seven which are used in some churches but not unanimously; viz., James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, Hebrews and Revelation. The great scholar, Origen, really gets us no further (*c.* 240). He adds none to the list we hold to-day, but doubts some that are in it.

[1] That a considerable, if unforced, winnowing had been required will be realised if one merely mentions that rejected Gospels and Acts comprised The Gospel according to the Hebrews, to the Egyptians, Gospels of Thomas, of Peter, of Truth, of the Twelve and of Nicodemus; also, Protevangelium of James. Further, The Acts of Pilate, Thomas, Paul, Peter, John and Andrew; the Apocalypse and Preaching of Peter, etc., etc. The rejected Epistles it is impossible here to enumerate. If anybody wants confirmation of the judgment of the Church in rejecting these let him dwell briefly on the crude inventions of the so-called gospels, or of a work like Paul and Thecla.

The persecution of Diocletian, which readers of Latin will find vividly, if partially, described by Lactantius in his *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, made a fierce attack not only on the persons of Christians but also on their sacred writings (A.D. 303), but it produced no definition of the canon, no list of what books were to be saved at all costs.

In 331 we find Eusebius in his Scriptorium at Cæsarea busily engaged in executing an order of the Emperor Constantine for fifty copies of Divine Scripture. Such an imperial edition must obviously have brought to a head the need for definiteness, some decision as to which books had a claim to be included. The passage of the further century, however, had brought no increased certainty We see the same assured books, the same doubtful ones and a few apocryphal stragglers[1] on which Eusebius glances wistfully, finally classing them under the heading, "spurious." Fourthly, he condemns a whole set of others as "bastard" Gospels and Acts, etc. We have no copy of the Emperor's Bible, and can therefore not be certain what ultimately went in. It should, however, be noted that some consider that the Sinaitic MS. may hail from this Scriptorium of Cæsarea, dating at the time when Eusebius was occupied there.

[1] "Barnabas" and Hermas are still there, also the Didache (or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles), the Apocalypse of Peter and the Acts of Paul.

By 365 Athanasius has issued his list, and it is exactly our New Testament of to-day. Jerome and Augustine threw all the weight of their subsequent influence in favour of the doubtful epistles (James and the others) so that we may say that the Synod of Carthage,[1] which Augustine summoned, and which confirmed his views, marks finality. There is no change for a thousand years or more until the day when the Council of Trent defined the catholic position for ever and a day by adopting the Augustinian Canon under anathema ("If any one will not receive as sacred and authoritative the whole books with all their parts let him be accursed"); whilst the Reformers, driven back on the authority of the Bible, as the only visible set-off to the authority of the Church deliberately renounced by them, had need to define their position with specific care. For they needed *reasons* with which to withstand assaults, and could no longer fall back upon the impregnable fiat of a Church with an irrefutable *Dixi*. Luther, in his translation, included the Apocrypha, but made clear that he held it lower than the Old Testament books. And he stalked independently through the New Testament referring to the "strawy epistle" of James, reckoning Jude a poor transcript of 2 Peter, and Revelation! well, *that* he would almost as soon have seen at the bottom of the

[1] 397 A.D., following preliminary synods at Rome (382) and Hippo (393).

Elbe.[1] Zwingli flatly rejected Revelation. The bulk of the Reformers, however, had to decide and to decide quickly. And what they chose is what we hold to-day. But certain books which they included were, nevertheless, held as inferior to the rest, notwithstanding their inclusion. That fact abides, and its significance also, so long as our reason endorses it.

[1] "The Apocalypse he considered neither apostolic nor prophetic, but put it almost on a level with the fourth book of Esdras, which he spoke elsewhere of tossing into the Elbe." Davidson *Encyc. Brit.* (N.B. In the Vulgate, Ezra—our book of Ezra—is known as 1st Esdras, Nehemiah as 2nd Esdras, and the two Apocryphal books, now known as 1st and 2nd Esdras, were respectively 3rd and 4th Esdras. Dr. Davidson is therefore, referring to the book I have designated 2nd Esdras on p. 231. Esdras is the alternative name of Ezra the Greek). Luther's argument, in full, against James was as follows:—"A right, strawy epistle compared with them (i.e., New Testament books) for it has no character of the Gospel in it. . . . It contradicts St. Paul and all other scripture in giving righteousness to works." His general conception of what a canonical book should be was, as Dr. Peake says, that it should preach and urge Christ. Luther continues: "It is the duty of a true apostle to preach Christ's sufferings and Resurrection." James failed in this, complains Luther, and he adds:—"It teaches Christian people, and yet does not once notice the Passion, the Resurrection, the Spirit of Christ." He regarded Hebrews and Jude also as inferior epistles. Paul was his touchstone.

(*B*)

THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON

In studying the *history* of the Old Testament books individually we found a more complicated task before us than with the New Testament. The New Testament books were all written comfortably within one century instead of something like seven. Also they were virtually composed each by a single writer instead of being compilations of several predecessors. Finally, they have not suffered the consecutive editions or revisions that most of the Old Testament books have endured.

But, in the case of the Old Testament, there were the strands J, E, D and P, to be disentangled and laid out straight; also lost books and sources behind even them to be assessed. Then we had to watch those four coming together and linking up like four separate globules of mercury, first JE, in the eighth century, then JED some time after the finding of "Deuteronomy" in the Temple 621 B.C., finally JEDP under priestly influence. This last amalgamation

may possibly be dated as previous to Ezra's public reading of the Law to the returned exiles in 444, if it be established that Ezra is reading from the Pentateuch as we know it. If on the other hand he is dealing only with the Priestly Code (P) then we cannot *safely* date the final amalgamation before 330, when the Samaritan Pentateuch began its separate history. We shall here accept the former supposition.

The Samaritan Pentateuch at least serves definitely to show that in 330 the Bible consisted of *no more* than the Law. Else the Samaritan Bible would have contained other books. And it has never done that.

Who is responsible, therefore, for this first step towards canonisation we cannot say with certainty, but we shall assume Ezra. In any case we must not regard too definitely the position of the somewhat legendary "Great Synagogue." As Dr. Skinner says of this very elusive corporation: "No such body as the Great Synagogue (at least in the sense of a permanent ecclesiastical commission) ever existed."[1]

Otherwise, the stages of the Old Testament canon are far easier to grasp than those of the New Testament.

Three quite clear landmarks are visible.

[1] Peake: *Commentary*, p. 37, to which excellent article my debt is greater than this quotation.

I

THE LAW (TORAH)

First comes the acceptance of the *Torah* (i.e., Law), probably under Ezra in 444. This almost certainly consisted of the first five books of our present Bible and has always held a place of reverence superior to that of all the books of the two later canonisations. And this *is* a canonisation. For it is a deliberate acceptance by the returned community of certain laws as the basis of a covenant with God. It marks a standard, therefore, both for guidance and appeal. That is a canon. The Hebrew was always a great man for covenants. He had to be. So had any Semite, for reasons of political safety in those primitive plains. Only two bonds were recognised as constituting immunity for life or property, viz. blood-relationship or a bond of amity deliberately entered into.[1]

There was a sense in which both of these entered into the Hebrew thought of relationship

[1] Prof. Kennett deals thoroughly with the Covenant idea in his book *In Our Tongues*, pp. 1-50.

with God. There was God's choice of Abraham, almost constituting *sonship* for him and his descendants; and there was the *promise* of God towards Abraham, together with the answering oath of allegiance taken again and again by His people. The reading of the Law, then, followed by endorsement on the part of the People, is not only a great act of national devotion, it is also the institution of a canon of law and appeal.

II

THE PROPHETS (NEBIIM)

It will be manifest from what we have written in an earlier part that the majority of prophetic works were in writing some while before 444, the early date for fixing the *Torah*, whilst the later limit, 330, would exclude little, if anything, more than Jonah and Daniel. Therefore it is but natural to assume that *The Prophets* were by this later date approaching the dignity of a collection. In fact, we owe to the writer of the Greek Ecclesiasticus explicit proof that the canonisation of the Prophets was in his time a completed event. In his prologue he writes: "Whereas many and great things have been delivered unto us by *the law* and *the prophets* and by others that have followed in their steps. . . ." This shows that the second stage of the Canon was arrived at before 130 B.C. Again, a reference in Dan. ix. 2 to "The Books" brings it back further, i.e., before 165 B.C., for "Daniel" is clearly writing of a collection closed before his time. Any later date would leave us with the

problem of explaining adequately why Daniel was not included. If, then, we decide on 200 B.C. as a general date for the second canonisation we shall not be far astray.

The Prophets (Nebiim) consisted of eight books divided as follows:

(*a*) Former: i.e., *Joshua*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, *Kings*.

(*b*) Latter: i.e., *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, *The Twelve*.

(The Twelve including all the minor prophets except "Daniel.")

How the "former" or historical books crept into a prophetic canon is to be explained by two facts—first, that they contained considerable prophetic histories like those of Elijah and Elisha; and secondly, that the writers were thought to be of the prophetic family, so that this effective mantle of the writer covered the canonical inadequacy of the written.

Now, the Jew dearly loved a prophet, and, if he showed his love in strange ways, at least he built him a tomb after he had stoned him. But the common people usually heard him gladly. If they soon forgot his words, or but faithlessly followed them, at least they listened as eagerly as Athenians to any new thing. Some of the saddest words of Jesus, those in which, according to our records, He approached most nearly to bitterness, are to be found in Luke xiii. 33, where,

with ironic humour, He comments that He is safe so long as He keeps outside Jerusalem! Any prophet would be! The fact that in the next breath His bitter grief has melted into the most exquisitely moving lament in literature[1] can never expunge from our minds that devastating judgment. Jerusalem has the monopoly of prophet-murder!

But the common people did love the thrill of a prophet, and the four centuries before Christ starved them badly. Just here and there a voice in the wilderness, soon stilled. The priest was in power, and the dead hand of a period only comparable to the mediæval blight on Christendom was at the throat of the chosen people. If that seem a strange metaphor it is only because the extraordinary rigidity of a dead hand is difficult to realise. In words written elsewhere:[2] "It is one of the most pathetic struggles in history, this continual heroic losing battle, fought over the battleground of a whole people—a people whom the seers knew to be a chosen people—a battle between prophets on the side of spiritual religion and priests on the side of ritual performances. And the priests made for a comfortable materialism and a self-centred

[1] "For it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not!"

[2] "*Yesterday and To-day*" p. 38.

nation, whatever they intended. After the exile they had it all their own way but for just a solitary cry, here and there, like that of the writer of Jonah, attempting to call people back to allegiance to their mission. Sacrifice proved to be the curse of the nation, and our Lord made clear His position in the succession of the prophets, not only by emphasising the words of Hosea: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' but in sweeping from the Temple the whole traffic that battened on sacrifice."

After the "dry" centuries, then, it is easy to understand the delirious joy with which the people greeted the appearance of John the Baptist, the veritable Elijah come to life again.

The priests, however, did not make war to the knife on prophets—after they were dead. They accorded them a place, though a subordinate place, in the community's religious life. It was the prophets who were so unreasonable! *they* were the exclusive ones that could not brook the rivalry of the bloodbath as an alternative religious exercise! So now, when the living force of prophecy was stilled, the priestly caste collected and issued the "Prophets" in written form, *but as a subordinate collection.*

There were never extended to it the reverence and status accorded to the Torah, in which, amid other matters, was included the whole ceremonial and sacrificial law. Still, the prophetic literary corpus *was* made and used, notwithstanding the

wholesale attacks it contained on sacrifice. This shows something of the entrenched strength of the priestly position, much as the British Government, like some bulldog amid snapping puppies, shows a kind of secure and lazy tolerance of all revolutionary propaganda. The position was, or is, too strong for that kind of menace to be taken seriously. Yet though Jesus, the last and greatest of the Prophets, had failed even to shake the stolidity of a Judaism that despised Him and, in a spasm of intolerance, crucified Him, within forty years the revolution had grown strong enough to defy all the persecutions of Nero, whilst national Judaism had passed into limbo.

III

THE WRITINGS (KETHUBIM)

THEN comes the third canonisation, the Kethubim or Hagiographa, which is of a more grudging and uneven kind. The books herein contained were always adjudged inferior, and their canon was never hermetically sealed. That there was such another canon, at least in process of formation, is, however, clearly indicated, again by the prologue of Ecclesiasticus (*circa* 130 B.C.), where we read such phrases as "the prophets and the *rest of the books*," "*the other books of our fathers*," "*the others that followed after them*" (i.e., after Law and Prophets).

In our New Testament we find quotations from all save *Ecclesiastes*, *Canticles* (i.e., *Song of Songs*) and *Esther*. The books properly divided are:

(*a*) Poetical Books—*Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Job*.

(*b*) Megilloth ("Rolls")—*Song of Songs*, *Ruth*, *Lamentations*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Esther*.

(*c*) Remaining Books——*Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles.*

This collection, then, would, perhaps, date somewhere from 150 B.C. onwards, but, at any rate, Josephus shows it established in the first century A.D. A battle royal had taken place between the rival scribal schools of Hillel and Shammai over Ecclesiastes,[1] and it is certainly difficult to say why this book should be in, and Ecclesiasticus out, until one examines what are apparently the scribal tests.

(*a*) Conformity to the Torah.

(*b*) Time limit for acceptable books (between Moses and Artaxerxes).

(*c*) To be written in Hebrew.

The first condition indicates why Ezekiel did not gain his position without a struggle. He was apparently not always " sound " in his conformity with the Law.[2] Either of the others would be

[1] The Hillelites decided that both books " pollute the hands," a quaint phrase denoting their sacredness or canonicity, thus signifying that it was necessary to wash the hands after touching them and before turning to profane tasks.

[2] Dr. Peake (*The Bible : its origin, significance and abiding worth :* p. 68) says of the difficulty of reconciling the legislative sketch in the closing chapters of Ezekiel with the Pentateuch : " This difficulty was surmounted by Hananiah, who, with the help of three hundred measures of midnight oil, succeeded in reconciling the two." Ecclesiastes was suspected of heresy and self-contradiction ; Esther for totally omitting the name of God ; the Song of Songs for its theme.

sufficient to wreck Ecclesiasticus in its surviving form; but (*b*) would wreck it even if the Hebrew original were then still intact. The Synod of Jamnia (*c.* A.D. 90) had reached unanimity about all but Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs.[1]

The humour of the triple entrenchments which protected the fortress of canonicity lies in the fact that they were all frustrate owing to the ignorance of the defenders.

As Dr. Skinner has delightfully put it: "We believe that the Jews were wrong in their views of the date and authorship of the books of the Old Testament, wrong in their doctrine of a time limit to inspiration, and wrong in their exaggerated estimate of the law as compared with the Prophets and the Psalms."[2]

However, lest this should seem to weaken the validity of the canon of the Old Testament, it is to be added that the scribes had very little to do with forming the canon, but rather with the inventing of rules which should explain how books had already got into it and others remained outside! One or two of the Hagiographa were at the mercy of their well-meaning but excessive pedantry. The rest, however, were secure in acceptance long before their day.

[1] The third canon apparently had not reached finality by Luke's time: see Luke xxiv. 44 ("Psalms"). For mention of the other canons, as such, see also Matt. v. 18 and vii. 12.

[2] Peake's *Commentary*, p. 40. Even the language test was ignored by the inclusion of Ezra and Daniel, parts of which were written in Aramaic (see p. 120).

IV

THE APOCRYPHA

The Apocrypha into which the Kethubim or Hagiographa is inclined to merge, must now be noted. It was included in the LXX (Septuagint); which has led some to suspect that there may have been a separate Alexandrian canon behind that document. The Hebrew canon never contained the Apocrypha. For us, Christians, the matter came to a head, as hinted already, at the Council of Trent, when the Roman Church accepted the contents of the Vulgate (which included a translation of the Apocrypha) whilst the Protestants followed Jerome, the author of the Vulgate, in rejecting the canonicity of the Apocrypha.

The books concerned are: 1 *and* 2 *Esdras*, *Tobit*, *Judith*, *Esther* (additional chapters), *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Ecclesiasticus*, *Baruch*, *Song of the Three Holy Children* (i.e., an appendix to Daniel), *Susanna*, *Bel and the Dragon*, *Prayer of Manasses*, 1 *and* 2 *Maccabees*.

To these books, then, the Roman Catholic Church, by decree of the Council of Trent, gives

"equal reverence" with the canonical books acknowledged by the Protestant Church. The latter adopted Jerome's position, that the questioned books were merely to be *allowed* "for example of life and instruction of manners."[1]

As Christians, we receive the agreed Old Testament canon because of the truth within the books as a whole, i.e., their manifest helpfulness to the religious life, the fact that they formed the study of our Lord's youth, and that they are a helpful introduction to much of the New Testament, giving as they do the history of a people chosen to do God's work in a special sense and to lead up to His supreme revelation in a Son born of their stock. We need not feel ourselves bound by scribal definitions, nor by the action of Roman or Protestant at the time of the Council of Trent. We can study also the Apocryphal books with a free mind, thankful to find truth and help in some, equally noting the puerility of many of the others. The strict limits of the canon are a matter of historical and relatively unimportant account, seeing that we do not believe Inspiration, Revelation, and Authority to be determined by time, space or man-made regulations, but that they have to do with self-evidencing truth whenever and wherever we find it. To the recognition of it we bring

[1] Those who are interested in tracing the history of Apocryphal recognition in greater detail should see Dr. Paterson Smyth: *Our Bible in the Making*, p. 135f.

reason, knowledge and comparative powers of judgment to accompany that act of faith which tells us that there *is* truth to be found in a world such as ours, and that we *are* equipped by God under His guidance to find it.

We are soon aware, in that frame of mind and attitude of spirit, that the books are not all of even degree of value and that they do not all show an equal degree of enlightenment.

God seems to hover over life, and to influence it by a kind of peaceful penetration, according as men welcome His entrance into their lives. What lies before us in Part IV is to determine, if we may, whether it was just in this everyday way that He was concerned in the construction of the Bible. Did He, on the contrary, exert a complete control of the writers? or did He inspire them in a special degree? or was it, as I have hinted above, just normal—by which I mean, in no more peculiar sense than that He yields to any good or important book by His unobtrusive Presence—or, finally, not at all? The last need not be argued. It is a negation. It takes position automatically if none of the others can be established or shown probable. It is appropriate only if we conceive that God has nothing whatever to do with the conduct of the world in which we live.

I will end this section by quoting Baxter's Saints' Rest (more than two hundred years old), thus showing that it is no mere revolutionary

tenet of the twentieth century that we here advocate. "The scripture is like a man's body, where some parts are but for the preservation of the rest, and may be maimed without death. The sense is the soul of the scripture, and the letters but the body or vehicle."

This brings us to the question of Revelation, Inspiration and Authority.

The Canon, viewed as a mere decision in Council, has no power to convince us of authority in the books concerned, especially since the lines of delimitation of that choice were so wavering. But, as one feels the books did and do make their own spiritual canon, so do they proclaim their own authority, that of Truth itself, and according to the measure in which each book contains it.

Can we assess the authority of what we are told? Was the inspiration of the prophet, the lawgiver and the apostle genuine? and was the material of their inspiration really a revelation from God?

Also, what of Him of whom His hearers asserted that He spoke with authority?

PART IV

WHAT IS THERE UNIQUE ABOUT THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE—IF ANYTHING?

REVELATION—INSPIRATION—AUTHORITY

THREE great subjects lie behind any adequate answer to this question. Theoretically their significance can be distinguished, but, practically, their action is interlocked, as will become quickly manifest. Briefly defined, the three are as follows:

Revelation is discovery or unveiling, and, in the case of Scripture, the term is used, or should be used, of the disclosure of spiritual matters which at the moment *could not have been discovered by men's normal powers.*

Inspiration concerns the means by which such revelation is communicated. Nobody denies the *need* for such an inbreathing in the case of flights too great for mortal mind: the main argument revolves about the *fashion* or *method* of its working.

Authority is concerned with the *power or right* of that which is revealed (or claims to be revealed) *to command assent or obedience.*

These definitions are rough but they will serve as a starting-point.

(*A*)

REVELATION

I

REVELATION IS NOT NECESSARILY CONFINED TO THE BIBLE

We may not limit Revelation to the Bible. We may claim a unique or supreme revelation, but not arrogate to ourselves a monopoly. We do readily acknowledge a nobility in the ethics of Confucianism: we recognise the ideal of reverence embedded in its ancestor-worship. We should, therefore, not be disposed to deny to this religion the title of revelation in respect of anything therein contained which could prove to be an abnormal spiritual advance on conditions and beliefs obtaining at the time. Similarly we do not ignore the Vedas (i.e., Brahmin poems) and the wisdom of their Upanishads, or alternatively "the Pali" (i.e., three baskets of teaching of the Buddhist), whereof it is asserted: "Buddha sketched out the text in heaven: the elaboration

of the sketch and its proclamation on earth were submitted by him to Tissa." Whether Buddha literally did what is claimed for him we may question, but not that there are touches of unearthly beauty in the work. Then there are the Zoroastrian (Persian) Gathas which were created by God, as is alleged in the Avestas, and are revered by true Parsees. Lastly, we notice the Mohammedan Koran, which claims a supernatural origin. One night Mohammed was "transported to heaven, and in a moment of time enjoyed 70,000 conversations with Allah, each of which contained 70,000 words. No wonder that the Koran was regarded as making all other literature in the library of Alexandria superfluous."[1]

In none of these does one deny the possibility of revelation. The question of fact must, however, be determined by sympathetic study, which shall, humanly speaking, establish, first, that what is claimed is truth, secondly that it is *fresh* truth, and thirdly that it was *beyond the power of normal human inference*. Revelation *should* be eloquent.

There still remains this criticism of these writings, viewed as a whole: that Confucianism lacks sympathy to give a soul to its stoical nobility; that Brahminism does not disown the degenerate excesses that are the outcome of its nature-worship; that Buddhism with its Nirvana tends

[1] Lofthouse: *The Bible: its Origin and Authority*, p. 97.

to effortless atrophy; that Zoroastrianism is liable to lose itself in myriad mythology; whilst Mohammedan scripture is a singular mixture of the exalted and the puerile, and by continuing to inculcate an unenlightened emphasis on the letter has fathered polygamy and slavery upon its obedient races. This last fact may be regarded as relevant to ourselves, both as instruction and warning for our attitude to the Old Testament.

All these religions are centred about a book, and that is dangerous, unless such books are accounts of a progressive enlightenment wrought out in human lives, and unless the steps and degrees in that progress can be traced, and are treated as tentative, sometimes faltering, steps. What has saved Christianity, and will save it again and again despite the presence among its adherents of those who sometimes obtusely worship the Book, is that we have at the centre of our faith a Person, an incarnate Revelation, of Whom the Bible is but the *record*. The Book is in a sense a historical credential, an introduction, but fortunately not the Christian religion itself.

This marks a sharp distinction between Christianity and most ethnic or eclectic religions.

II

THE BIBLE IS NOT *ENTIRELY* REVELATION

Not only is it true that the Bible does not exhaust Revelation, even "Christian Revelation," but it is itself not always Revelation. Much of it is man's mistakes about God, doubtful imaginings of men's minds; by our standards, naturally, some of it is erroneous "science." It contains, too, an abundance of history which is mere copying of court registers, annals and the like; plain accounts of battles, plagues and normal events of the day, which are in no sense revelation and needed no inspiration to write, but only care and plain honesty. It is when we clap the Bible between our hands and hold it out as one total and indivisible revelation that we gratuitously put ourselves in the position of religions which are in slavish bondage to "holy books" that contain, nevertheless, much that is unholy. That is not true of the Bible, but it *is* true that for much of its writing no more was needed than the normal gifts which you and I bring to our everyday work,

i.e., logic, mathematics, economics, common sense, discrimination, sensitiveness, etc., such as have built up the greater part of modern knowledge and culture. One chapter is built steadily upon others like bricks going into a house.

Revelation is a title rightly to be reserved for the great mysteries of the soul in relation to its Maker and God, for conceptions not otherwise ascertainable, facts and wonders which ordinary processes of deduction, normal skill and science could never have disclosed. God's patience, God's love, God's forgiveness, God's Fatherhood—these were not truths we should normally have discovered, especially in so imperfect a world as ours, where much would seem superficially to conflict with such conclusions.

Here, then, is the reason for our speaking of our Scriptures as a Revelation. As we trace the course of this literature we trace also the way in which the great facts of God and about God burst in progressively upon a people chosen to that end; a people, mark you, not scientific, not philosophical, neither stable nor progressive, an unlikely people, indeed, ever to have discovered a great deal if left to its unaided resources; but a people absorbent, and, in their higher strata, responsive and retentive, with power to see visions and power to record visions vividly. That is an important point. *But the Revelation*

is made to the people rather than to the book; it is apprehended in souls of men, not first disclosed in print. The book is the *record* of the passage and progress of revelation in the hearts of a people. That is the source of its life-force. At the zenith, one span of Time received the incarnate Christ, but neither tomb nor death could hold him. Men cry: "I know not where they have laid Him," for He will not remain buried. Men have laid Him, too, with reverence in a record, and Time carries that record slowly down the centuries, as a glacier a relic; but, as each man, stooping, looks upon and loves Him, He steps forth again into life for him. Christ is the living God, and men have made books like shrines to hold Him. Yet ever from them He comes out into men's hearts, and thus the Revelation is from life to life. To take the book and worship it, apart from the *experience* it seeks to communicate from one soul to another, is to take an envelope and store it up whilst tossing away the lavender it brought. The fragrance fades out even from the choicest envelope if we exalt it at the expense of its contents.

When we bring spirituality and sensitive sympathy to these books, we re-encounter, stirring in response to our spirit, the moods and emotions of living men from under the years. The revelation, which warmed them, again warms us. But we must never forget that revelation is *spiritual experience*, a touch of God's soul upon that of

sensitive man. We find this true, in the highest degree, when we study through the crystal of the gospels that living Revelation whom we call Christ. He begins to stir and move before us, and to step out of the imprisoning book. Then has the writer done his part. The *living* impress of Christ on hearts of men in His day becomes again the *living* impress on ours. The Book is not Life. It is only the shell of Life.

We shall defeat everything, then, if we confuse or *identify* the record with the revelation. In a word, the Book is a guide-post.

It is here that the Christian revelation and its records stand right apart from all others. In the lesser religions, bound to codes and books, there is stagnancy. Like photographs they stare, rigid and stereotyped. There are in them good laws, good morals, good advice: there are bad laws, bad morals, and bad advice—features that the standard of normal civilisation of to-day has passed and left behind. The note sounded, you will hear, is too low, too crude, completely antiquated and out of tune with to-day. The religion has "dated," as we say, because it has stayed still. It is petrified and it will never come alive again. In a word, it is a book and not a person.[1]

[1] The Koran, for instance, is almost the static picture of the minds of Mohammed and his associates in the seventh century A.D., yet claiming verbal adoration and permanent recognition as complete truth.

But of Jesus it is not said that He "dates." It has been said at times that His standard is too high, even quite inaccessible, but not that it is too low, never that it has been surpassed. Forgiveness, Fatherhood, prospect of cleansing for mind and soul together with Power to attain it, Living Companionship and Divine Understanding —these things do not date. They are alive, eternally adapted to us in, and literally by, a living Christ. The other revelations—not to quibble over the claim—are at best foothills that we are passing or have passed—not without their beauty—but Christ is the living peak to which we press.

And, just because the gospels record the greatest revelation and inspiration in the world's history, the gospels are the greatest *record* of revelation, and *carry* the biggest inspiration. Not necessarily in the pens of the men who wrote, as we shall see, but in the phenomena and teaching the pens record. The value of the gospels, too, carries the value of the Old Testament, as a grown man guarantees the influences of the nursery, and it carries also the value of the epistles as more or less enlightened comment and meditation on the Living Revelation. It is only when you regard the books themselves as the revelation that you harden and freeze the life out of it all and follow the desiccating course of the Mohammedan and the later Pharisee.

Criticism can never harm Living Revelation. You can discuss, compare and criticise the style of the gospels, find little mistakes, or perchance even big ones. But, unless you can rub out of Life the Living Figure, you cannot lose your Revelation.

(ℵ)

INSPIRATION

This has proved a much more difficult subject upon which to reach anything like decision than, perhaps, even Revelation. For the purpose before us, of studying Inspiration in regard to Scripture (i.e., *recorded* Revelation), I am going to dismiss any notion of the word as applied to the common round and daily task of life. Be it said, just once and for all, that it is impossible to believe other than that the help of God is given freely and accepted frequently by unnumbered souls in the everyday occupations of life. Let us term that the all-pervading *grace of God*. Otherwise we shall be in danger of weakening another very great word and idea, or at any rate generalising what we are at the moment trying to treat as particular.

Inspiration, or "inbreathing," we will understand hereafter as a particular afflatus of the divine poured out for a specific task or experience that would be otherwise completely beyond a man's comprehension or achievement. When a

man writes better than he knows, and says more than he realises—that connotes inspiration. When it can be said, as Jesus puts it: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven" (Matt. xvi. 17)—that demands inspiration. When Peter had reached right out of himself half-way to heaven to meet God's Mystery ("Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," Matt. xvi. 16)—then it is fitting to talk of inspiration. For the normal duties of life and its normal demands we use the normal powers with which also God has provided us. When Crisis or Revelation is imminent He endows us *ad illud* with a miracle of appreciation which we call Inspiration. So far I have not been able to see that the writers of the books of the Bible, *merely as writers or recorders*, come into a category of this kind.[1] Before I have finished I hope to distinguish quite clearly, in this matter of inspiration, between the experience and its record.

The application of this distinction to Scripture, however, we must postpone until we have briefly set in review the conclusions reached on the subject by some of the great minds—and the little ones; conclusions still widely maintained to-day.

[1] What does seem irresistible, however, is that the Biblical writers regarded *as a segregated and indivisible company* have certainly no claim at all to stand in any *unique* or *exclusive* category of inspiration.

I

VERBAL INSPIRATION

This term has been used to imply that every word of Scripture was dictated by God, the writer being a passive instrument under His direction, bereft of all use of his own personality for the time being, or, at any rate, robbed of his liability to make mistakes. This is a totally artificial conception, and without any foundation either in reason or in experience (unless certain of the more dubious spiritualist "phenomena" be admitted as evidence).

There is sufficient evidence in almost any chapter of the Bible to refute it. Incidentally, the Bible never makes such a claim in the case of any single book. Some have sought to give divinity to the letter of the Bible by quoting the anathema in Rev. xxii. 18, 19, quite forgetting that the New Testament was not then collected, and that the "book" referred to can imply only The Apocalypse of John. Otherwise, quaintly enough, John's gospel (and possibly Matthew and Luke also, which appear to date later than

that Apocalypse) would be denied a place in the New Testament! Any little mistake, such as the attribution in Mark i. 2, of a prophecy to Isaiah instead of Malachi;[1] the curious fact that all the four evangelists assign different words to the Inscription on the Cross; the conflicting accounts of the death of Judas in Matthew and Acts; the divergent accounts in the first three gospels of such events or states of mind as the Denial of Peter, the Temptation of Christ immediately after the baptism, the Institution of the Lord's Supper, etc., would be sufficient to reduce the edifice to ruins, for the Holy Spirit could never have actually *dictated* differently to different evangelists.[2] If, moreover, the defenders of this theory retreat a step and say that, at any rate, in the lost originals verbal inspiration obtained, but that we have lost the single version through copying mistakes, it would surely seem unreasonable that God should not, after scrupulously dictating a record, have kept it intact. But, in

[1] Mal. iii. 1. Certain ancient manuscripts have the words "in the prophets," instead of "in Isaiah the prophet." This would appear to be a scribal correction with a view to eliminating the mistake. As the word "Isaiah" is vouched for by Aleph, B, D, etc., against A, etc., a strong case for its original genuineness is presented. This is an additional instance of the combination of Aleph and B being almost conclusive (see page 20). The rest of Mark's quotation (i. 3) is rightly attributed to Isaiah (xl. 3). The slip is comprehensible enough and not serious to any theory but that of Verbal Inspiration.

[2] To such a standpoint the Old Testament, as we now understand it, represents a perfect quagmire. To attempt to devise any theory of verbal literary inspiration that would cover all the revisions and redactions would constitute a nightmare.

any case, such a hypothesis has no practical bearing on the question, since we are scarcely in a position to dogmatise verbatim from either side concerning the lost originals.

How, then, did this particular theory come about? and how has it persisted to the present day? Possibly more than the one explanation of its origin might be suggested, but inevitably I think most weight for its *survival* must be attached to the crisis of ecclesiastical necessity in the Reformation.

In itself the theory is, of course, based on a great assumption, nay, even a presumption. It says, in effect: If Almighty God is going to bestow a revelation, it must necessarily be in such and such a way, and on just these terms and no others. The assumption once made, that it was not fitting that a revelation from God should reach us in any but a certain rigidly correct form, it became a matter of vital necessity to be blind to all discrepancies which conflicted with the theory, or else to explain them away in a fashion that did more credit to enthusiasm than to clarity of perception.

Perhaps at this point several things fall due to be said. The holding of this theory has not been inconsistent with the most beautiful Christian character. Fortunately, imperfect knowledge and innocent error frequently do not interfere with moral and spiritual beauty. Also, the theory has appealed by its simplicity to those who have

not been trained to meet difficulties of the mind without terrifying discomfort of the soul. And, again, it was and is held by many simply because they either know of no other view, or are afraid that anything less than verbal or plenary inspiration will probably land them they know not where. It is impossible to deny sympathy to the position of such earnest Christians, but it is equally impossible on that account to assist in perpetuating an error which is going to be increasingly harmful in an age of keen inquiry and righteous demand for the complete truth.

Therefore, I shall trace the early appearance and history of this strange misconception, and I shall then examine certain more tenable theories, leaving the reader to decide for himself concerning their merits.

Verbal Inspiration is in its origin Rabbinic. We have made clear the care and scrupulosity of the Jew in regard to the text of his Bible. "Drop a letter and destroy the universe," was a pithy exaggeration of the notion that sowed the seed of this false theory. The theory was the more unreasonable at the time of its origin inasmuch as the Old Testament text was, as we have seen, due to an almost arbitrary selection of one manuscript from among many! However, let us allow that the theory may have been born in *unconscious* insincerity.

The Early Fathers of the Christian church

were divided upon the question. They might be arrayed as Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, etc., *for* verbal inspiration, against the giants Origen and Jerome *plus* Chrysostom, Basil, etc., who *opposed;* with Tertullian and Augustine inclined to wobble. After the early centuries it speedily dropped into complete abeyance, for the church became herself the infallible interpreter of Scripture, and the question of any other infallibility immediately sank from view. The difficulties of the verbal inspiration position therefore tended to be banished *without being first adequately faced.* Else we might have seen less of it in these more enlightened days.

That fact, and the political value acquired by the theory in the Reformation period, must account for its longevity.

The Reformation began in a perfect paroxysm of independence of thought. There were Luther, Zwingli, Œcolampadius, Erasmus and the rest handling the books of the Bible with most vigorous abandon. Every revolution begins with a tornado which may develop, like the French and Russian political storms, into general licence, but which generally settles after a while into a conservative calm as close and tyrannical as its predecessor. Calvin was the first to evidence such a reaction, and to him beyond all others the Reformed or

Protestant Church owes the incubus of this resuscitated theory. Calvin held it on grounds of conviction, be it allowed;[1] many other and lesser men by reason of a semi-political expediency.

For it came about like this.

The Roman Catholic had an infallible church to which to appeal: the self-bereaved Protestant had nothing. In controversies he was hopelessly handicapped. It was the day of external authority. One needed authority to be successful in controversy, and the day of controversy was a long and bitter one. There was but one other available authority as counterblast to the

[1] Calvin is a puzzle, and defies satisfactory analysis. He was the greatest Biblical scholar of the Reformers, and he was no slave to tradition, for he vigorously combated conventionally accepted errors of his day. In his Institutes, moreover, he claims the need of the Spirit of God as interpreter of the Word of God. The solution must be, I think, that he was caught in the backrush of ecclesiastical necessity, the sense of need of an infallible, tangible authority. It is difficult to reconcile his great mind with the peddling expedient, for instance, which he employs to "save" the letter of Scripture in the story of Bartimæus of Jericho. Luke speaks of one blind man cured as Christ *entered* Jericho (xviii. 35). Matthew (xx. 30) speaks of *two* blind men healed as Christ *left* the town. Calvin suggests that Bartimæus met Christ on his entry, went for another blind man and met Christ on the other side of the town as He went away, at which point *both* were healed. Ingenious, but how futile! for Calvin is still landed with the difficulty that Luke states that the first blind man was *healed* when Christ *entered* the city. Mark (x. 46) further complicates matters by speaking of *one* blind man, but at the *exit* gate. (To Mark we owe the name —Bartimæus.) Two of the three have made a trifling mistake, or possibly the authorities on which they relied have done so. That is the simple explanation, but, of course, quite fatal to verbal inspiration.

Infallible Church. It had to be the Infallible Bible. There the Reformation, great as it was, made one of its two chief blunders—one hesitates to call them betrayals, for it is so easy to be wise after the event. If the Reformed Church could but have taken the great line on Authority to which we shall all be driven at length, then the "great and glorious" Reformation would have been infinitely more great and glorious. The line I mean is that the only Infallible is God Almighty, Who is not available for purposes of controversy. Therefore men cannot always and at once be perfectly sure in detail what His will may be, but must hopefully trust to be enlightened. Such an attitude, perhaps, was too much to expect in an epoch like that. It was to demand that a church should fight with a hand strapped behind its back, or with both hands nailed to a Cross. So the Reformers fell back on the *quid pro quo*, and bad things were done in the name of an Infallible Book. Old Testament thunders and massacres were loosed on peasants; witches were burned at the stake on infallible Old Testament warrant; and the schoolmen waxed pedantic and quarrelsome over the conflicting doctrines that could be argued from epistles. The sun went behind the clouds.

The second step which political and ecclesiastical expediency demanded was to enthrone another human being as a set-off to the authority of the

Pope, instead of realising that the true and only Head of the church is the Invisible Son of God, Who is also the One Infallible. Thus ensued the crowning buffoonery of history, the setting up of Henry VIII as Head of the English Church and Defender of the Faith, an elevation bringing in its train all the ills of Erastianism (State control of the Church) which have hampered and harassed the Establishment, and in varying degrees marred its spiritual efficiency to this day. Big betrayals like that carry long-drawn issues, for the religion of Christ is spiritual, and we worship One who is invisible. When we set up idols, vision languishes, and the people perish.

However, such is the heritage we, as Englishmen, have received from the ecclesiastical statesmen of the Reformation. Round our neck we carry still, as legacy, the halter of Verbal Inspiration, to mark our share in a day when the young new church took lessons in expediency. To cling to Verbal Inspiration, when our eyes are opened, is but to mark ourselves down in a succession of time-serving that demands visible authority of black print on white paper, instead of the Invisible Spirit which was given to guide us into all Truth.

That the alternative is a venture is true; but so is our life, and so is our faith. Even so, we have no ultimate choice but to launch away—and be confident in our Guide. And, after all,

a sign-post may be chipped and still be a good sign-post. It is only when we strive to make a sign-post into a dwelling house, or something else it was not intended to be, that it fails to satisfy the demand.

II

SPECIAL INSPIRATION

Twenty years ago, rather more than to-day, it was endeavoured by moderates, whilst deprecating Verbal Inspiration, to establish for the Scriptures a *Special Inspiration*, and that for the Bible *as a whole*. That is to say, whilst admitting verbal errors and minor misconceptions inseparable from a people's growth in knowledge of God and life, and from their progress in spiritual understanding—handicaps shared therefore by the writers of its Scriptures—they contended that the books, in fact the collection as a whole, were inspired in a fashion and with a kind of inspiration denied to any other books before or since.

One could never quite perceive why this claim was made, and on examination could only feel that the wish to render the Scriptures in this way unique among all other good books was rather inclined to father the thought that it was so.

The arguments used to establish the *exclusiveness* of Scriptural inspiration have always seemed

to me just the ones that would break down the walls of partition which it is desired thus to erect.

How can the Bible be inspired in a *sense* in which other good books are not? Had the claim demanded a greater *degree* of the *same* quality of inspiration as other good books, I could have understood. But I must then immediately have countered with, "Yes, perhaps John's gospel, but not Chronicles; 1 Corinthians xiii, but scarcely Ecclesiastes." And that discrimination would have broken the *unity* of the Bible, as far as inspiration went, for in between those extremes must have been wedged a vast amount of external literature whose *degree* of inspiration seemed to entitle it to stand there. Possibly with an unconscious intention of preventing such a wedge being driven, the Bible was bound together in this theory by putting it in a class of inspiration by itself, varying, it is true, in amount as between book and book, but held in isolation as a whole from all other books by the *special* nature of that fluctuating inspiration.

But to me this seems wholly artificial and unwarrantable. It is to place far too much weight on the perspicacity of those who arranged the canon. It is to make far too definite a claim for the books on the fringe of the writings, those which nearly fell into the Apocrypha. What special inspiration, indeed, is in Ecclesiastes which is denied to Ecclesiasticus? in Chronicles that is denied to Maccabees?

It is seriously argued that the whole tendency of the Bible evinces a sincerity, frankness, morality, piety and love of righteousness that put it in a class by itself. But the choice of such virtues as criteria must admit into the discussion every book—and they are many—which conforms to this ideal of directness, sincerity and purity. The whole notion seems rather to savour of a pious and reverent *hope* that the class of inspiration *may be* different, rather than any assurance that it *is* so.

A second line of argument adduced in its defence is that the writers of the books were themselves conscious of direct inspiration beyond that of any ordinary literature. I am not sure that even this argument carries us far. The Jew has always spoken with a directness startling to us. Hebrew has no saving clauses. Paul says this: "For neither did I receive it (i.e., his gospel), from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." This bespeaks a sense of inspiration by which he received revelation from Christ, but even so, he does not pride himself on any *uniqueness* in his inspiration. So has many a modern preacher, poet, and mystic felt that God gave him his message. In our age, however, the claim is put a little more tentatively, for we live in a day when we "test the spirits whether they be of God" (a striking sentence from 1 Jn. iv. 1) by the corporate sense of believers. Many a man is sure in his

own mind of his revelations and inspirations, but what in Paul was the direct force of conviction would tend to-day, in a preacher so placed, to be construed as blatancy. Moreover, Paul was not always right in details, and he knew it. Nay, without any undue criticism of Paul, it is possible to say that with equal conviction we are inclined to be a shade more reticent in our claims until the revelation, which we sincerely believe we have had, has been checked as such by at least some considerable section of devout and sensitive believers. In Paul's day no such body of mature Christian consciousness existed.

Again, as the claims of the Old Testament writers are often brought into the question, in particular the prophet with his perpetual "Thus saith the Lord," we shall do well to remember at once that in our judgment his claim to have received a revelation was in some cases mistaken, inasmuch as he assigned to God commands to massacre men, women and children, an idea which it is impossible for us to assign to any other source than the man's own misconception of what God was like. "Thus saith," as Prof. Kennett has shown, is in many cases equivalent in translation to no more than "Thus *thinks* the Lord,"[1] and, concerning what the Lord *thinks*, such positiveness is impossible. But, if the mind

[1] We must remember that Hebrew has no indirect narration—no *oratio obliqua*. Every speech had to be recorded in the first person. Therefore one must hesitate to claim verbatim accuracy.

of God is to be understood by men, *we* should fare better, perhaps, living after Jesus Christ, than the prophet of old. But, in any case, these men are not claiming *unique* or *special* inspiration.

Again, if such claims concerning unique or any sort of inspiration are to be accepted at face value, then surely it is open to me to produce a volume of "truths" which I assert Christ has declared to me, and to insist that I was conscious of *peculiar* inspiration in the matter, whereupon you would not be able to question my claim. It shall be enough that I make it. Even so, the other day, we were presented by a medium with a new Acts of the Apostles, dictated straight from the other world by Cleopas (the Cleopas of Luke xxiv. 18). It had a certain likeness in language and matter to the Acts, but nobody, I imagine, accepted it, simply because the medium made such a claim.

We must be fair in this matter. You would subject the letter and substance of my hypothetical revelation to the most intense scrutiny before you either accepted it as revelation or acknowledged my claim to a special inspiration. So also, with the Cleopas affair—the last I remember of which was a law-suit as to the ownership of the copyright!

Special inspiration, so far, has not, then, appreciably advanced its acceptability. Indeed, any claim to revelation or inspiration, special or otherwise, will eventually have to be assessed by

what is proffered as fruit thereof, not by any personal claims of the author as to *how* the material came to be there.

It is becoming of ever-decreasing importance *how* the scriptures were written, and of major importance *what* is written. I might have written my supposed work in a trance—or a nightmare —or in plain sobriety by candlelight. None of that would interest you particularly, until you examined the work I produced, and until your judgment and spiritual sense either acclaimed it or denounced it. In the event of rejection the *manner* of communication would not interest you at all.

No writer, then, can successfully claim inspiration, still less a special inspiration, unless the work he produces warrants it. And in this matter, to hang round the neck of John or Paul, in a claim for special inspiration, the weight of a whole Bible of most uneven material is to wreck such a claim from the outset. In this matter only one book can be placed and judged at one time, and that primarily on the appeal of its material, and only secondarily on any claim made by its author.

III

NATURAL INSPIRATION

THE Theory which still holds the field with most moderate thinkers is known as Normal or Natural Inspiration. This interpretation seems to present the most adequate case. Moreover, it combines without friction with the development that is suggested in the next section, a development which seems to me to agree with the characteristics of the writings before us and with the tremendous phenomena which they record. This development of the position (i.e., dividing the record from the revelation for the purpose of investigating the nature of inspiration) has the added advantage of giving due weight to the instinct of so many thoughtful people that the Bible is unique. This development suggests that *behind* the Bible we do find *special or unique* phenomena, yet at the same time avoids the difficulty involved in setting arbitrary limits of time, place and category for the Holy Spirit to work within.

Natural Inspiration, briefly, asserts that all men and all ages are equal in *opportunity* for inspiration by God, but subject clearly to the responsiveness and sensitiveness of character of the individual concerned. As environment plays a part in lighting up a character, so an inspiration from God that leads to a revelation from Him to the inspired person will naturally show up more conspicuously against a background of darkness or squalor. The prophets received their inspiration often amid conditions of national degradation, so that the revelation flamed out brilliantly against the night. Such also was the case with the Apostles who went out with the great evangel to preach to vice unashamed and cynicism unmitigated. Above all does Christ stand out like a red glow of sunrise against a world gone grey in despair. But of that in a moment. We were talking of books, it will be said, of records, rather than the great moments they narrate. That is correct, though the distinction is steadily making itself felt. For the moment, therefore, we continue with our review of theories concerning the manner of *recording*. We are still dealing with the third of these, which touch after all but the husks and pods of revelation, the *records*, for the most part, of *other men's inspirations*.

One feels irresistibly driven to say, in this matter of recording, that Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, no matter how crude, recorded a revelation that had not come to Paul when he

wrote to Philemon,[1] and was mediated by an inspiration that was not different in *kind*. Again, I should contend that Myers' "St. Paul" cannot be attributed to an inspiration inferior in *type* to that which resulted in 1 and 2 Chronicles. In fact, the whole conception that God has a "special" side of Himself to present to specially selected people is one that fails to appeal. If God wanted Paul to do something, then God would speak to him; if I am required to do something, or to perceive something, then it is not less than God Himself, entire and undivided, who will make that revelation, and I shall need all the divine inspiration available to render me capable of apprehending it. The only discrepancy will be in *results*, and for that, not God, but I, am responsible, my lack of sensitiveness and devotion, of singleness and capacity.

If the Apostle Paul stands above any of us in the *degree* of his inspiration it is due either (1) to the bigness of the revelation that entered the world in the first century A.D., outshining all previous or subsequent revelations in importance, or (2) to the fact that he was more acutely sensitive and responsive—or to both. But is there reason to say that God kept a special phase of Himself for the thousand years of scripture-writing and then closed it as men closed the canon of Scripture?

[1] Paul asks Philemon to receive back Onesimus as a "brother beloved" without denouncing slavery as such. He is to be received back by his master because he is a Christian, not set free because he is a man. For this the time was not ripe.

Surely it is so much simpler than that? Is it not analogous to friendship? We may gain from our friend all he can give, but that is only according as we can take. Friendship is not merely to be *given* intact by act of will, but *taken* according to demand and capacity to receive. And for either friendship or inspiration there is no close season, nor any preferential century. Natural Inspiration has therefore little to be said about it, simply because it *is* natural. It is axiomatic in its essence and thus begets no ponderous syllogisms in its defence. In fact, no case need ever have been stated for it had not other and misleading notions first reared their heads. Its mission, then, is negative or unostentatiously destructive. It clears the shadows away like sunshine, and then one looks not so much at the sun as at the world it releases and reveals. There are passages of *sheerly inspired writing* in the Bible, and there are passages of *sheerly inspired writing* outside it; just as there is pedestrian stuff enough within, as without. But is that the heart of the matter? Far from it! We are at grips with something far bigger than inspired writing.

IV

AN EXTENSION OF THE QUESTION

The inquiry, indeed, has not gone far enough. What I say now must sound elementary, but, elementary as it is, it has not received adequate emphasis.

I do not put it forth as an alternative theory so much as a principle of development, which would, to my mind, greatly clarify a vexed topic. It is, I believe, the position to which we must eventually come, and it may appeal, perhaps, to some who are not able to assent to any of the theories exactly as I have outlined them hitherto. In a sentence, I want to thrust the area of debate farther back, to what seems to me the obvious point on which the weight of argument should rest.

The value of the Bible is in *what* it records, not *how*, and the *inspiration is not in any primary sense in the books*.[1] A book may be written in the most extraordinary way and yet contain twaddle; a book may be written in utterly normal

[1] Until the weight is shifted in this way nothing but discomfort can ensue. Waiving the question of that precious even "light, which lighteth every man, coming into the world," the inspiration of the Bible revelation is not in the writers. Else you must

circumstances and by completely normal means, and yet contain a revelation. All that is demanded for constructing a *record* is common honesty, common sense, common appreciation. Now the majority of both Testaments is sheer record, and, *as such*, needed no more inspiration than the political history of England. If I have only to *record*, I can record things of big import or small with equal facility provided I have the historian's knack of mind and perception. Given the requisite information I can draw a literary picture of events, construct a digest of dialogue, represent the trend of the chief movements of any period.

I have implied that by far the greater part of both Testaments is not direct personal experience. Usually the man who wrote the account was not the man who had had the experience.

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logically extend the special provision also to the copyists, and again to the translators, and yet again to the interpreters, preachers and readers alike. Such diffusion of inspiration immediately wrecks the purpose with which the theory of "inspired writers" sets out. It is impossible to establish anything special or peculiar to Scripture which should be of any practical service unless all who handle the Scriptures are to share it. Whereupon it ceases to be peculiar. New Testament Greek Deissman and others have shown to be merely the colloquial Greek of the day, varied by the human characteristics of the writers. Methods of compilation, etc., are equally just the ordinary methods. Everything to the unprejudiced eye is completely normal, even to the little errors and misconceptions. Any other theory is only an instance of arguing from what it is thought *ought* to be the case. There is no burden on us to prove a negative or to defend ourselves because we fail to detect anything abnormal. The onus of proof is on those who claim to see abnormality. They must establish the case from the books before us. That task, we honestly believe, is impossible.

Our Lord brought, or actually *was*, the revelation. The real inspiration, with the revelation, was in *Him*. Four men recorded the revelation, a *comparatively* simple affair, given normal equipment. Paul, too, had amazing experiences, including some indubitable revelations from God. It was actually an *amanuensis* who wrote them down from dictation in the first instance, but it is customary for even the most rigid literalist to associate the inspiration with Paul rather than with the amanuensis. Similarly, Mark's account of the Christ revelation came to him through Peter; "Matthew's" was compiled from a variety of records as any other history would be. The revelation and the accompanying inspiration are in the *life of Jesus*, the *Pauline experiences*, the *vision of Peter* concerning the Gentiles, etc. There is no case for saying that the man who did the "pen-work" either had, or needed, any inspiration beyond the normal endowment with which God had originally blessed him and which he had himself cultivated. It is normal work done in a normal way.

John, you may say, is different. He wrote his own experiences. He, in his own person, had the mood for insight, he had the vision, he had the mystic meditations, the exalted communion. And he wrote of them himself. Yes, even so, but he wrote quietly afterwards of what he had known in ecstasy.[1] He did not write in a trance.

[1] Poetry has been defined as "emotion remembered in tranquillity." That is what I am trying to parallel here.

John the Seer was inspired, John the Recorder had but to relate. In the same category would come prophets who wrote of their own mystic experiences. Inspiration, then, is further to seek than in the recording; it is, if anywhere, in the man who enacted the scenes recorded, who himself experienced the thrill of great forces and movements, the man who felt himself electrified by a glance from Jesus, the man who had a mood of prescience, of exaltation, of insight, of self-sacrifice. *Such men as these are the inspired*, and the record of them and their great moments stars the Bible like a comet streaking across the night. The Bible is the plain record of inspired experiences and visions that lie vividly amid a background of ordinary events and ordinary people. There is the divine ray gleaming on Abraham as he hears and obeys the call to go out into the unknown; the same ray darts along and picks out his "sacrifice" of his only son. But the intervening record is of events dull and largely profitless from an inspirational point of view. So is Isaac's life. He was a dull son of a great father. That is so true to life. There is just the pathos of the bedside scene, and that is all. Jacob has a few great moments and much mean, drab stuff between. The said drab stuff is of value as background. It is part of the whole and gives significance to the high lights.

These *hours* and *days*, these *moods* and *flights* amid much that is but ordinary, and much that

is wrong and mistaken, constitute the inspiration. The books, however, are only the *records* of the great moments of inspiration and of the revelation which emerged in those moments. They relate, *with varying skill*, the times when their heroes were more than themselves, exalted above the normal, so that Truth found its way into human life, such Truth as was either before its time for normal discovery, or was of such a nature as unaided normal powers could never have apprehended.

Someone may interpose at this point to claim that all recording of *splendid moments* is inspired by God. That may be. But we agreed that that was not what we were talking about. We are all helped in our daily life. That is not the point at issue. And in any case it swamps the question by letting in *all* humanity, *all* the time, so that discrimination is immediately lost in the deluge.

Again, I continue, there is nothing in Luke's gospel, *considered as a record*, which need differentiate it categorically from any other reliable and scrupulous piece of historical work. It can be, as Renan says, "the most beautiful book in the world," and still, *so far as the writing of it goes*, no more inspired than any other piece of good writing coming from a *spiritually-minded man of generous sympathies, good taste and sensitive, literary touch.*

What strikes one in some of these writers is how manifestly they are themselves, how plain are the normal characteristics of the men. Take a case like "Matthew," for instance. All the way

through his work, his individuality—his normal equipment of ideas and prejudices—is stamped on the work. Not an opportunity is lost of forcing, even awkwardly, a fulfilment of prophecy upon the history of Christ. The Old Testament and the Jewish race, above all the foretold Messiah, are in his mind and in his heart throughout, onwards from that genealogy which he pointedly traces from Abraham instead of Adam. There are normal mistakes here; there is, too, the characteristic softening down here and there of Mark's more vigorous phrasing of the humanity of Jesus, His tiredness, His griefs, His anger, His *inability* to work miracles on account of people's unbelief.

Again, Peter's ruggedness and blunt directness overshadow Mark's gospel, just as Luke betrays ever a doctor's interest in medical phenomena. Equally obvious is Luke's quality as a great historian. True, he or Matthew makes a slip over the death of Judas (Matt. xxvii. 5, Acts i. 18), but touching the notorious instance which used to be alleged against him (Acts v. 34-39), one feels that, remembering the triumphant vindication of Luke's accuracy concerning passages quite as awkward, it is more probable that with so common a name as Theudas, and with rebellion at that time so epidemic, Luke and Josephus refer to two different rebels, than that Luke permitted an anachronism.

All the way through you can see the normal equipment of the men at work, just as you would

recognise me and my partialities in this, did you but know me. Nowhere, on the other hand, do you see any sign of supernatural *interference* or diversion of the normal into abnormal channels.

We have, in my judgment, taken a false direction whilst striving to make a perfectly legitimate point. The Scriptures, particularly the gospels, *are* unique. It *is* probably true that no books *will* ever compare with them. They *are* "*special*." But the reason, and the sole reason in my judgment, lies in *what they contain* of inspired moments of men who lived and perceived God's nature or heard His voice. Clearly, men who actually encountered Jesus, the Incarnate Revelation, had a story and an experience that were unique. And, as literature, the record of it may well have a quite unique value, but that is *because of the unique subject-matter*. And the relative value of the books, in this matter of *recorded* Revelation, is not largely affected by the way in which they were written, but by what they contain. That is why our gospels are, as I say, secure. They hold the story of Christ, and introduce you to Him as a Figure which is to come to life in your own life. The Epistles would have had a value in any case as an honest, thoughtful, but not infallible, comment on the Incarnate Revelation. They have additional value in places as containing the record of inspired moments of the great apostles. The same is true, but in a minor

degree, of the Old Testament. It will always have an entirely separate value as literature, but its major value lies in its record of inspired moments in a quite patently unique people's history, and as presenting those moments as links in a quite astounding chain of continuity and manifested purpose.

With a book like Job, for instance, the inspiration is in the mood that conceived it, the glorious poetic enthusiasm and the super-sensitive understanding of human pain. So, with the psalms of insight, the inspiration was in the mood of abandon or ecstacy that begot them. In both, the writing was a quite normal affair, at most a matter of literary art and judgment. Mere mistakes in transcription, literary solecisms or blunders, slips in history, bias of judgment—all these occur, but they are secondary. So long as the gist of the conception reaches us and strikes the answering experience within us, we can recreate and realise it according to our imagination and spiritual sense. *Of course*, a sensitive, cultured man usually reproduces the experience better than a dull man. But that is a separate gift of God. Such things happen just so in our day. The great artist produces a beautiful conception beautifully according to his skill in pigment and line, the bungler clumsily. That is life. God does not level up the two. The story of Jesus is wonderful as it comes from the rugged mind of Peter in Mark's gospel; it is more wonderful when Luke handles it. That

is because the two men were different, and their gifts different, not because God inspired them differently at the moment. He allowed them to do the work according to their nature and gifts. The charm of Luke's writing is inherent in Luke's character and manner of life. In short, the literary charm *is Luke*.

Holy Scripture, in fact, is holy because of the holy life it records. If—to be greatly daring in hypothesis—one could imagine that God should again become incarnate, this time in our industrial England as once He did in pastoral Galilee, would it be inconceivable that there might be written by a man of spiritual grace, sensitive insight and literary skill a "gospel" whose revelation would compare with that which Luke embodies? some more believing Gibbon, some gentler Carlyle, some more emotional Froude? Meantime, there may have been better historians than Luke—he, at least, was a great one—conceivably there may have been cleverer compilers — but probably few — and greater literary artists—possibly. Nevertheless he is secure *because he has the biggest story to tell*, the story of a revelation that turned a world of gloom into a world of hope. But the *revelation* itself was vocal *in Galilee*, was silently eloquent on the road to *Jerusalem*, streamed from the Cross *on Calvary*, and the channel of it was the *inspired Son of God*. Wherever preachers told the Story, the Life flowed afresh from the Living

Risen Christ to hearers thus made conscious of Him. Wherever the written story is read the same phenomenon occurs—given the receptive, sensitive nature. The reading of the record catches the attention, but the living Christ performs the miracle.[1]

God's grace is about us all, when we write and when we read. I am far from denying this. I am not concerned to *deny*. We are usually more acceptable when we assert than when we deny, and probably surer. No more do I deny that the Spirit is here now to guide us into all Truth. I deliberately affirm it. But He works through human character and not against it. It is still true that the spiritually sensitive will perceive and receive truth where another will miss it. He that hath ears to hear, as Christ suggested, will hear, and the others will not. My general point is that we are wrong, as the Jews were, if we hold any "close season" restraint for inspiration. It is not a question of the season but the seer. After the seer has seen, any sensitive man can record the vision described to him, and will do so according to his God-given and self-cultivated gifts. I only claim that, granted equality of theme, intensity of soul and adequacy

[1] As Coleridge has beautifully put it: "In the Bible there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all other books put together, and the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being." That is a notable phrase "finds me," for it bespeaks an active Principle that steps from behind the word, right through it, and takes hold of one.

of intellectual equipment, the heights of God are not barred to *our* achievement. If that be so, no particular question of writers' inspiration arises outside the general doctrine of God's free grace as accorded to us all for the living of our daily life, whether it be writing, teaching, engine-driving or carpentering. The gospel inspiration is involved in the gospel message for which the writers were not initially responsible. Had the experience which they recorded not been wonderful no amount of inspired pen-work could have made it so.

Not *how*, then, but *what*. The accent goes back to the penultimate, from the writer to the *experience* he records, and we are at grips again with the principle indicated earlier in the book, that this people was chosen by God as the vehicle of His gracious revelation, His *special* revelation if you like; that this *people* was greatly inspired at intervals throughout its whole history to receive and exemplify that progressive revelation, and that the inspiration became plenary and complete in the most beautiful and sensitive *Man* of all history, for in Him God Himself appeared, not as a spasmodic inbreathing, but as a pervading Presence, sharing an uninterrupted union. And we note that the revelation and the inspiration would have been none the less real, though minimised in sphere of operation, if they had never been recorded at all in written documents.[1]

[1] Dr. Peake has a delightful sentence: "Scripture is the precipitate of national history and individual experience."—*The Bible: Its Origin, Significance and Abiding Worth*, p. 407.

(C)

AUTHORITY

THERE are bound to be those who cry: "Where is this going to lead us?" That should be considered, certainly, but not with a view to buttressing any untenable positions through fear of abandoning them. There are those who quote frequently with unforced pathos: "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him." But is that fear justified? Instead, is it not true that if modern criticism and candour have achieved anything, it is to put back the infallibility where alone it can belong, and to make Christianity the worship of a Person and not of a Book, itself a Life and not a Creed?

In a sense we are where the Reformation divines found themselves. We always are. We can set up a stop-gap visible authority, a counter-blast to somebody else's challenge, or we can say quietly: "My hope is in the Everlasting, but I cannot always guarantee details."

In the end, there is no Authority but Truth. And Truth is not a visible nor a tangible thing; it can never be that except as God Himself becomes man. Outward authority is breaking up fast, what little is left of it. No mysterious finger has ever come from Heaven and pointed to the Church, accompanied by a sound as of thunder, declaring: "*That is Authority.*"[1] Nor has ever a hand reached down to deliver a Book, signed and sealed, as being Truth Unquestionable.[2]

Only, slowly in the life of men and nations has grown up the knowledge of what is good and true, the sum of all the revelations and all the inspired moments, shared out, wrested, tested, wrenched, twisted, straightened and finally proved. In the Bible you have the picture of Truth worked out in a people. That is the only place where truth can be worked out and come alive—i.e., in people. What the Bible represents as going

[1] I am not perturbed by the "keys" passage, taking it to mean primarily that Christ's church is founded on the *declaration* "Thou art the Christ" (Matt. xvi. 16–19), i.e., the Christhood of Jesus is the foundation of the Church. Thus Paul reads the matter. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. iii. 11).

[2] The Church bears a certain reflected authority, derived from her Founder but dependent for its *degree* on the quality her human mirrors attain. The Bible carries a certain authority as recording vital history and tested truth. The one is the instrument, the other the signpost of God. The original instrument, the nation, broke in God's hand, whereupon He fashioned an international instrument to replace it. The Church must make a better use, a clearer reading of the signpost than the nation did.

on in one people, and culminating in God Himself become Man, is going on in all people; for, in a universe of people, having a personal God behind and within it, spiritual Truth can ultimately appear only in the terms of personality and character. Therefore your only court of appeal, your only authority, is perfect character. That would mean God.

And there we must end, by whatever means and however circuitously we arrive. Yet we may trust Jesus Christ as God made comprehensible for you and me. And we may trust our servants, the historians, to have given us an honest picture, more than adequate to introduce us to that personal knowledge and experience of God in Christ which is at once the proof of religion and religion itself.

It only remains for me briefly to consider three types of objector, all of whom have been nurtured on Verbal Inspiration, if on any theory at all. The other theories outlined in this chapter are capable of unification, as I have tried to show, and still have work to do in the world. For this one I see no future.

First there are those who have grown old in a faith that seemed simple and easy. There was the infallible record: *Only believe*, was the plain command. And they did believe, usually perceiving no difficulties; or if, like old Sir Thomas Browne, they saw them, they believed still, even

to the fullness of the famous dictum: *Credo quia impossibile.* And their faith has frequently ripened into real experience, whilst their life has often been rich in communion and in the joy of religion. Of course it has. Correct opinions were never demanded as the shibboleth by which to enter the Kingdom of God, or none of us would ever enter. Such people have come into touch with the Living Reality behind the book, although often they persistently attribute the experience to their theory of the guide-book. In many cases, such people, now elderly, have not developed the student's mind or poise, have not learned to suspend judgment over a knotty point and still to remain at peace. To these sincere and earnest Christians, to whom the world owes so much, this book is not directed. My counsel, if desired by them, would be that they go straight on with the light of their own day, realising that my book was intended for those who have to face a very different world from the Victorian. For their comfort I would remind them of what Dr. Westcott states, i.e., that not *one thousandth part* of the New Testament is affected by alterations of any importance, so that they need not feel that they live in a world where the contents of their Bible are likely to be undermined and wrecked.

Secondly, there are others who are ignorant—and proud of it. To them I am inclined to give short shrift. I remember, after preaching some twenty years ago, in a certain church in Surrey,

on the subject of Jonah as a missionary epic in allegorical form, a smallish but very important young man forcing his way into the vestry and announcing *at* me: "If I did not believe that the whale swallowed Jonah, I could not believe in Christ." Having recited his pitiful little bit of bombast he gazed at me to note how I was impressed. Ignoring the pretentious tirade, I contented myself with expressing my sympathy for his condition. But there are still many such, as I find and read of—men who say foolishly: "If every word, jot and tittle is not inspired the Bible is false"; thus, because not allowed to command the garrison, trying to sell the pass to any infidel or doubter who has thirty pieces of silver to offer. Fortunately they cannot actually betray the position by setting an exaggerated value upon an opinion, but unfortunately they can and do convince many an honest, if superficial, inquirer that if verbal inspiration is a figment there is nothing left. To such, if they have read as far as this, I would but recommend a modicum of humility and modesty to mingle with their assurance. For truth is not a monopolist concern, but the corporate trust of all humanity. No one section or branch can claim to hold the sole key to such a deposit. Even the most modern of us has to pray for humility!

Lastly, there are those honest but unconsciously unreasonable people, brought up in narrow

beliefs which they have jettisoned, who believe that religion ought to be the one easy and simple thing in this world, the one mathematically provable certainty. They say—"But if you admit an error in the Bible surely the whole thing goes?" They are not arbitrary, not defiant, but only ignorant, and as I think, unreasonable. They neither study the question nor reason about it. Else they would realise that no phase of life responds to those conditions. Our fathers are not infallible, but we do not necessarily assume their advice to be of no account at all. A doctor is not infallible, but we do not on that account rule out his help. Captains of ships, pilots, engine-drivers, signalmen, motorists, are not infallible, but we do not on that account cut travelling out of our programme. When there is no infallible authority or assurance about any part of the Tree of Life there is no need to single out one particular branch and lop it off in that off-hand fashion. After all, for Christianity and its basic facts in history, there is the very sound authority of good historians, of mature scholars, of the unbroken witness of the church. Are these so slight as to warrant their being ignored? And why should a man consider that, if he is not provided with an infallible and complete creed representing just what he is to believe, he is therefore absolved from making any study of the question for himself? Not infrequently the same man would reject as an infringement of

his independence any well-trimmed creed offered him at second-hand. Our faith is not like ready-made clothes but has to be cut to measure —*our* measure. "Hast thou faith?—have it unto thyself." And after all, if we had such clear-cut credal authority, life would be a tame thing, and obedience very mechanical. As it is, life is more mercifully varied. Truth is not cut square like a cube of sugar to be handed about. It is as wonderful as the Milky Way, as vast, and as nebulous in its fringes.

Does such a man as I picture expect his business to be compressed into a formula, or made like easy reading for the young? Was the Latin language mercifully potted for him at school so that he could swallow it without labour? Or is it only religion, the biggest thing in life, that he wants reduced to infantile proportions?—How, we hear, is he to know what to believe or what is true, if literal infallibility be denied to the scriptures? Plaintive little cry from a full-grown man! Well —how can anyone else arrange what he is to believe? and how can he believe anything but what, after investigation, appears to him true? *After investigation*, mark. Religion and life have no ultimate reward for the man who comes to superficial conclusions after shoddy pretence of study. Truth is not for the lazy, the casual or the complacent. Religion is not the one thing

to be made easy so that it shall take no time and cost no effort. Perish the thought!

Does the man take his profession, his games, or his business thus? Either to understand and master at the first onset, or toss the thing over in pique? Where then is the boasted reasonableness of man?

How will he know what to believe, indeed? How will he find what he can believe?

Why, by the same diligence of study that he applies to his education or his business or his profession.[1] By settling down to the most fascinating study in the world, and making ready for the greatest possible adventure. If the task really *were* elementary and puerile he might well disdain it. But seeing that it bristles with points of interest and that so much depends upon it we should respect him more if, before washing his hands of the matter, he settled down and made some concentrated study of the whole question. There is an instinct within us all for the apprehension of possible Truth and for the consequent winnowing of the fruits of our gleaning, but it needs training and education to make it sensitive and sure. And it is very true that "without others we shall not be made perfect" in this matter. Comparison of ideas and deference to the views of others are but part of the great scheme of God's

[1] What Huxley is reported to have said once concerning the requisite degree of self-dedication is applicable to the mind also: "It does not take much of a man to be a Christian, but it takes all there is of him."

social universe. Life is not simple, nor is the search for Truth. Their glory is that both are *possible*.

But for those I imagine before me now, real students, whatever their years may be, let me just sum up the position.

You are young, at least in mind; you are free; take your liberty. You are delivered, if you so wish, from the cramping shibboleths of bygone generations; from the callow insincerity and the tyranny that often darkened the Middle Ages and succeeding centuries, the mania for ever squeezing allegory out of reluctant portions of the Bible, because having stated that it was *all* revelation—even the genealogies, lists of Kings, and Song of Songs—some moral meaning had to be extorted. Jerusalem to the Middle Ages was the centre of a round flat plate (i.e., the earth), where Adam was buried, and where Jesus was crucified exactly over Adam's grave so that the saving blood might drip into his skull! From all such crudeness of geography, of astronomy, of religion and Biblical interpretation you are mercifully delivered. Accept your freedom, use your judgment in all things humbly, inquire diligently and fear nothing. You will not find expert modern geography, astronomy and science in the Bible, you will not even look for untimely disclosures in such matters from Christ Himself, Who was concerned, being Saviour and not Schoolmaster, to teach us of God and show us

God, to do for us the things we could not do for ourselves, and to accept the limitations of His age in those matters which our own gifts would be adequate to determine in due time as the generations passed on.

Treat your Bible sanely and fairly and it will answer your questions honestly. In its earlier records its history is not always history as we understand it, but, knowing the views of schools of writers, it is far from impossible to arrive at the basic facts behind the variant narratives. They point clearly enough to a people, lit by an ideal, conscious increasingly of the need of something from without to lift man to those heights of which he sometimes caught a despairing glimpse. Then, at the moment when the sands have run low or the wheels slackened speed or life gone grey—choose your own metaphor—comes the Christ with the great revelation that has transformed the world. When you examine the books at the end of the Old Testament you find the stiffening embers of dying fires. There is no vision. There is much propagandist bias and cynical pessimism in writings like Chronicles and Ecclesiastes. They are instances of the distortion of prejudice, the curse of *ennui*, salutary lessons as to the grey Christless side of life. And, as the Bible is a microcosm of life, they are in place. But we are delivered from having to believe that, in the main, God speaks in them. Still hovering, too, at this moment of helpless stagnation there

is the unforgetable beauty and pathos of the great prophets, lingering like a cloud of hope in a sky of burnished brass whilst the thirsty land longs for rain. Then comes the Messiah just when life is at the nadir, and tells us how to live, and offers His help for that new life's achievement.

Come to your own conclusions about inspiration. I have tried to show that it is better to drop all three theories and centre on the inspiration of the experiences that lie behind these writings. The idea behind Natural inspiration thus becomes the truest, but the word "inspiration" becomes misleading, and one would refer to the writing as "Normal or Natural Recording." The whole question of writers' inspiration ceases to be at all acute. The recording is simply a normal aftermath of paramount events and experiences. But whether your study leads you eventually to Verbal inspiration, Special inspiration, Natural inspiration, or whether it presses the inspiration back through the books to the experiences which the books but record; whatever you arrive at, go farther and make contact with the experience to which they all testify. Christ is the centre of all; and, with the story of His experiences, moods, visions and communions you are touching elemental truth, for God is Truth. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," said Jesus (Jn. xiv. 6). Christ Himself is God's real Word, and Christ is Authority, not because the people

said He spoke with Authority, not even just because He claims it, but, finally, because He *is* Authority in the perfection of His character. And Authority for us is only, at length, the Truth we have perceived and received, searched for and found in God. Ultimately there is no external Authority for the soul, only the internal, the Infinite become Intimate.

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